



Child Poverty Delivery Plan progress 2021-2022: Scrutiny by the Poverty and Inequality Commission

Executive summary

In preparing the annual Child Poverty Progress Report, Scottish Ministers must consult the Poverty and Inequality Commission on the progress that is being made towards meeting the child poverty targets.

The Commission has looked at what progress has been made so far towards meeting the interim and final child poverty targets. In addition, the Commission and its Experts by Experience Panel have reviewed the actions set out in the 2022-2026 Child Poverty Delivery Plan to consider whether the proposed actions for the next four years are likely to be sufficient to meet the targets. Children and young people have also shared their views with the Commission about the actions that the Scottish Government is taking.

What progress has been made in 2021-2022 towards meeting the child poverty targets?

Due to data quality issues resulting from the pandemic it is difficult to draw conclusions from the child poverty statistics about the progress that has been made towards meeting the child poverty targets. It seems likely that levels of child poverty may have reduced on some measures due to a fall in median income and temporary increases in social security. The temporary nature of these factors means that is unlikely to indicate longer term progress. What we can say is that, after delays caused by the pandemic, we have started to see progress being made again on delivering major commitments such as the Scottish Child Payment, funded early learning and childcare, affordable housing and employability support.

Does it appear to the Commission that such progress is sufficient to meet the child poverty targets?

While the progress made during 2021-2022 was very unlikely to be sufficient to meet the child poverty targets, commitments made during the year and in the 2022-2026 Delivery Plan now make it more likely that the Scottish Government will meet the 2023-2024 interim relative child poverty target. Increasing the Scottish Child Payment to £25 per week is likely to have the biggest impact.

The Scottish Government is less likely to meet the absolute poverty interim target and it is unclear whether it will meet the other interim targets. There is also a strong risk that the rapidly rising cost of living will make it much harder to meet the absolute

poverty and low income and material deprivation interim targets, and that families will not see an improvement in their quality of life.

The Scottish Government's cumulative impact assessment does not project as far as the 2030-2031, but acknowledges that meeting the 2030 targets will require an unprecedented reduction in child poverty of a further eight percentage points, which is unlikely to occur without considerable changes to the drivers of poverty. The Scottish Government cannot wait until the next Delivery Plan in order to identify what more is needed as by then it will be too late to implement the kinds of the transformative policies that will be required in order to meet the final targets.

What further progress does the Commission consider is required to meet the child poverty targets?

The Scottish Government must now focus on implementing existing commitments, while also developing the transformative policies needed to meet the 2030 targets. The commitments made over the last year and the new actions set out in the 2022-2026 Delivery Plan will need to be implemented effectively and at pace in order to deliver on their potential to meet the interim relative child poverty target. More transformational change to address the drivers of poverty will be needed if the Scottish Government is to meet the 2030 targets. The Scottish Government must start developing further action now, on shaping the economy, housing and transport in particular, in order to be on track to meet the 2030 targets.

Recommendations

The Scottish Government must:

1. Focus on implementing at pace and scale over the period of the Delivery Plan, demonstrating this focus by ensuring detailed delivery plans and timetables are in place, published, and robustly scrutinised both inside and outside government.
2. Put in place a system to ensure that policies across government contribute towards reducing child poverty in a meaningful way and that this contribution can be clearly demonstrated to the Commission and others.
3. Commit to publishing robust monitoring data and evidence about actions in the Delivery Plan, and about the impacts for the priority families in particular, and demonstrate a culture of continuous learning and improvement where evidence is used to adapt and improve action.
4. Publish details of how experts by experience have contributed to the design, delivery and evaluation of actions in the Delivery Plan.
5. Engage closely with the Commission from now onwards to develop further action now to meet the 2030 targets, focusing particularly on shaping the economy, housing and transport.
6. Take specific and urgent action to mitigate the cost of living crisis.

7. Ensure that its assessment of what further action is needed to mitigate the impact of the crisis is informed by data and analysis for all four child poverty target measures and other relevant indicators that are sensitive to the impact of the crisis, and commit to publishing these assessments.
8. Advocate at UK level for urgent, progressive revenue-raising measures in order to fund greatly enhanced social protection measures in response to the cost of living crisis.