

# East Ayrshire Anti-Poverty and Inequalities Strategy

## 2025 – 2030



***“Together, we build an East Ayrshire free from poverty and inequality, where everyone can flourish, belong and shape their future.”***

## ***Foreword by Councillor Douglas Reid, Leader of East Ayrshire Council***

---

This new Anti-Poverty and Inequalities Strategy represents the Community Planning Partnerships continued focus and commitment to end poverty and inequality across all communities in East Ayrshire. The strategy unites the collective efforts of all partners across the local authority, aligns resources, shares learning and strengthens collaboration in tackling the root causes of poverty and inequality whilst building healthy and strong communities.

In East Ayrshire, poverty and inequality remain significant challenges for many residents. These issues impact individuals, families, and the overall wellbeing of our communities. Currently, one in four children lives in poverty, employment and access to quality, long term jobs remain a challenge, and average life expectancy is below national figures. The cost-of-living crisis has further exacerbated these concerns, resulting in numerous households facing financial hardship. Addressing poverty and inequality is essential to improve quality of life, increase opportunities, and promote resilience among both individuals and communities.

The new strategy focuses on five interconnected themes: Household Poverty as the primary cause, Child Poverty due to its disproportional impact on children, Health and Wellbeing Inequalities linked to poverty and poor health outcomes, Organisational Change and Capacity to strengthen anti-poverty efforts across all sectors, and Building Individual and Community Resilience to foster healthy, connected communities.

The formation of a new Strategic Oversight Group, led by an Independent Chairperson, will ensure the Strategy is implemented and progressed through a whole systems approach, focused on prevention and early intervention and rooted in dignity, fairness and human rights.

Importantly, this work will be guided by the real experiences of local people and to ensure those voices are heard a Lived Experience Reference Group is being established.

I believe this approach, built on solid foundations and shaped by real evidence, will make a lasting difference in addressing the root causes of poverty in East Ayrshire and create a fairer, more inclusive society where no-one is left behind.

## Contents

Introduction .....	4
Vision, Mission and Values .....	9
Context & Rationale .....	11
Lived Experience.....	13
Development of the Strategy.....	15
Strategic Themes .....	17
Strategy at a Glance.....	28
Alignment of Strategic Themes with National and Local Policy.....	29
How We Will Deliver the Strategy .....	31
Support and Enabling Functions .....	33
Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation .....	35
Appendix 1 .....	36
Appendix 2 .....	37
Appendix 3 .....	38
Appendix 4 .....	40

## Introduction

East Ayrshire is a diverse area covering some 490 square miles with a population of approximately 120,390 people spread over urban and rural communities. Kilmarnock is the largest urban area hosting a population of around 46,600. The second largest town is Cumnock with a population of around 9,000, other settlements range from less than a hundred people in some villages and rural areas.



Many parts of East Ayrshire are prosperous and it is a vibrant area to live, work and to visit. There are also many opportunities available for East Ayrshire's children and young people. However, significant inequalities continue to exist within and between our communities.

The East Ayrshire Community Plan (2015-2030) is the sovereign planning document for the East Ayrshire area, providing the overarching strategic policy framework for the delivery of services by all partners. The Community Plan sets out how outcomes for people and service delivery in East Ayrshire will be improved in working towards achieving the following vision:

**“East Ayrshire is a place with strong, safe and vibrant communities where everyone has a good quality of life and access to opportunities, choices and high quality services which are sustainable, accessible and meet people’s needs”.**

The East Ayrshire Strategic Plan 2022 – 2027 underpins the kind of Council we strive to be – caring, kind and connected, with people at the heart of all that we do. It focuses on our strengths and demonstrates how together we will address the challenges that we face.

Our Strategic Plan sets out high-level ambitions incorporating key priorities that have been developed across six strategic themes stated below:

- [building a fairer economy](#)
- [tackling poverty and inequality](#)
- [improving community wellbeing](#)
- [supporting children and young people](#)
- [delivering a Clean Green East Ayrshire](#)
- [ensuring financial sustainability and resilience](#)

A number of other key strategies are also closely tied to the Strategic Framework, providing further context and details in relation to the work being advanced by the Council and its partners. These include:

- Ayrshire Regional Economic Strategy
- East Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership Strategic Plan 2021 – 2030
- East Ayrshire Children and Young People's Service Plan 2023 – 2026
- East Ayrshire Climate Change Strategy
- Capital Investment Programme

The development of the Anti-Poverty & Inequalities Strategy will strengthen oversight to tackle Poverty in East Ayrshire, it is also recognised this strategy will link in and complement key strategies and frameworks already in place.

As a Council we take account of the communities we serve, including local needs, circumstances and aspirations. We recognise the lasting impact of Covid-19 and the recent Cost of Living crisis still impacting communities across East Ayrshire. Following from our recent Cost of Living Campaign we recognised tackling Poverty and Inequality is a key priority for us and as a collective our aim is to end anyone living in poverty.

Poverty and inequality continue to represent significant challenges for Scotland. National statistics indicate that approximately one in five children lives in poverty, while many families are affected by increasing living costs, unstable employment, and persistent health disparities. The Scottish Government has identified the eradication of poverty as a national priority, with particular emphasis on child poverty. Ambitious targets have been set to reduce child poverty levels by 2030 (see Appendix 1), alongside further priorities to improve household incomes and address structural barriers that prevent people from fulfilling their potential.

The national landscape illustrates that poverty is multifaceted and entrenched in factors including insufficient income from both employment and social security, the

rising cost of living, health disparities, and unequal access to opportunities. Effectively addressing these challenges necessitates a coordinated approach involving all levels of government in partnership with employers, voluntary organisations, and local communities.

In East Ayrshire many of these national challenges are strongly reflected at the local level where overall deprivation and child poverty levels are some of the highest in Scotland, life expectancy is lower than the national average and 43% of all unemployment is attributed to long term health conditions.

Despite these ongoing challenges, it is equally important to celebrate the strengths, creativity and achievements that have come from East Ayrshire. East Ayrshire has a strong heritage of producing individuals whose contributions have had significant national and international impact. Notable examples include Alexander Fleming, born in Darvel, whose discovery of penicillin transformed global healthcare; Lord Boyd Orr of Kilmaurs, Nobel Peace Prize winner and advocate for food security; and Bill Shankly of Glenbuck, whose leadership in football remains widely recognised.

These achievements exemplify the determination, talent and potential inherent within East Ayrshire communities. Today, the local communities continue to exhibit notable resilience, solidarity, and a well-developed sense of identity where local partners, organisations, and communities are working collectively in supporting residents through initiatives such as advice services, employability programmes, efforts to address food insecurity, and measures aimed at improving health and wellbeing.

As well supporting local communities, East Ayrshire Council also have a range of supports and good practice currently embedded across services to help tackle the ongoing poverty and inequalities issues faced locally. As a Council we recognise this is not just a local issue but in fact a nationwide issue. Collectively as a Council there a range of supports in place to support our residents and noted below is only some key examples of supports in place:

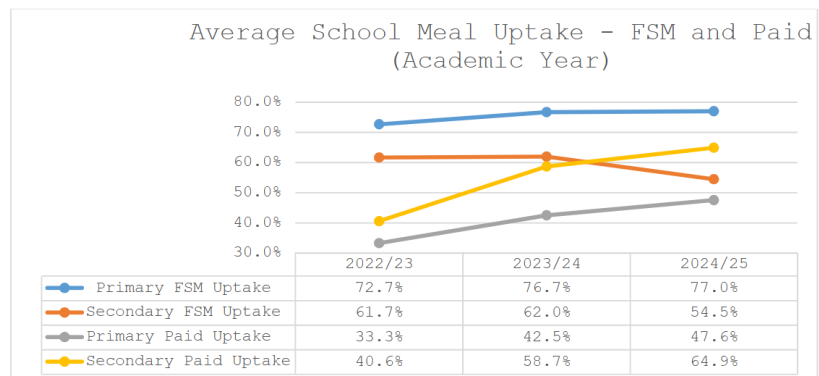
#### Fairer Futures Partnership

East Ayrshire Early Intervention Fund is a £40m ten-year fund, which will tackle inequality, child poverty and increase fairness in our communities by funding projects that are both meaningful and effective. At Cabinet in October 2024, it was welcomed that East Ayrshire had become a Fairer Future Partnership area and it was agreed that the Scottish Government funding would be passed to three local third sector partners – CentreStage, The Zone and Yipworld - to deliver place-based supports that reduce poverty, demonstrate fairness, provide skills for learning and work, move individuals into employment and reduce demand in other areas.

## Free School Meals

School Food continues to offer an opportunity to directly support families and young people and contributes to wellbeing, education and sustainability goals. Food support to families and young people has significantly expanded in line with changes to the nutritional standards school meals require to adhere to. Since 2014 all primary 1 - 3 pupils have been entitled to free school meals, regardless of family income. Locally over the years the Council has continued to roll out free school meals across from primaries 1 – 5.

East Ayrshire Council Members decided in February 2025 to further support the expansion of Universal Free School Meals to Primary 6 and 7 from August 2025, and continue to provide half price school meals in



Secondary Schools. This support is available to all families across East Ayrshire to help tackle child / household poverty ensuring every child can access a hot meal. The thematic diagram highlights the continued upward trend in free school meals uptake in Primary however a slight decline in secondary school meal uptake in 2024/2025.

## Clothing Grant

A key support available to families in low-income household in East Ayrshire is the School Clothing Grant / Early Years Clothing Grant, this is a one off payment of £75 per child. This additional financial support helps assist families cover the cost of school uniforms.

## Universal Credit and Financial Inclusion

Our Universal Credit and Financial Inclusion teams already work closely with other statutory and third sector bodies to address a wide range of issues, such as child poverty, debt, fuel poverty, rent arrears, homelessness and housing issues and employability. With this plan we will continue to address these issues in partnership with our communities and other sectors.

### Anti-Poverty & Inequalities Grant Fund

Poverty and inequality is of such critical concern and a key strategic priority for Council that on 27 February 2025 Cabinet agreed to allocate £1.000m to support the development and implementation of the Anti-Poverty and Inequality Grant programme. The aim of the programme is to provide funding across community groups and key stakeholders for innovative projects which will help tackle poverty. The projects will be in addition to sustaining current activity aligned with the cost-of-living crisis work.

### Housing

Our Strategic Housing Investment Plan is a five year rolling plan that sets out how we plan to deliver more new build affordable homes, support and facilitate regeneration and deliver suitably designed properties for those with different needs. The Plan is informed by our Housing Asset Management Framework and Local Housing Strategy. Our Housing Improvement Programme ensures improvements are made to existing housing stock, with tenants' homes meeting Scottish Housing Quality Standards.

This strategy represents East Ayrshire's collective response. The scale and complexity of poverty in the region necessitate more coordinated and strategic interventions, whilst acknowledging the history of achievements and proven capacity of individuals and communities when provided with the right support. This strategy brings together the efforts of all partners across the council, health and social care, education, housing, employability, voluntary sector and communities themselves under a shared vision and a whole systems approach. By working in partnership, aligning resources and embedding the voices of our communities, we can deliver a strategy that not only responds to immediate needs but also creates the conditions for long-term, sustainable change.

At its core, this strategy is about fairness, dignity and opportunity. It is about ensuring that everyone in East Ayrshire, regardless of background or circumstances, can access the support and services they need, creating pathways and prospects for a good life, with people in control of their own future.



## Vision, Mission and Values

### OUR VISION

*“Together, we build an East Ayrshire free from poverty and inequality, where everyone can flourish, belong and shape their future.”*

### OUR MISSION

We will tackle the root causes of poverty and inequality by:

#### **Lifting households out of poverty**

- Providing timely, preventative, and responsive support to all individuals experiencing or at risk of poverty, with a focus on early intervention and priority groups, to reduce escalation, break cycles of disadvantage, and promote long term stability.



#### **Supporting children and young people**

- Ensuring every child living in poverty grows up healthy, confident and supported, with the opportunities they need to thrive in education, work and life.



#### **Building resilient communities**

- Creating places that are healthy, connected and sustainable, where everyone has fair access to services, employment and social support.



## OUR VALUES

Grounded in Human Rights, our Values will shape the way we work and keep us true to our mission:

<b>Fairness</b>	We act with equity and integrity, ensuring everyone has equal access to opportunities.
<b>Dignity</b>	We respect and value every individual, promoting secure and meaningful lives.
<b>Opportunity</b>	We create the conditions for people and communities to thrive.
<b>Collaboration</b>	We work in partnership, recognising that lasting change is only achieved together while reinforcing the ethos of the Community Planning Partnership – <i>Planning as one, working as one, achieving as one.</i>

## Context & Rationale

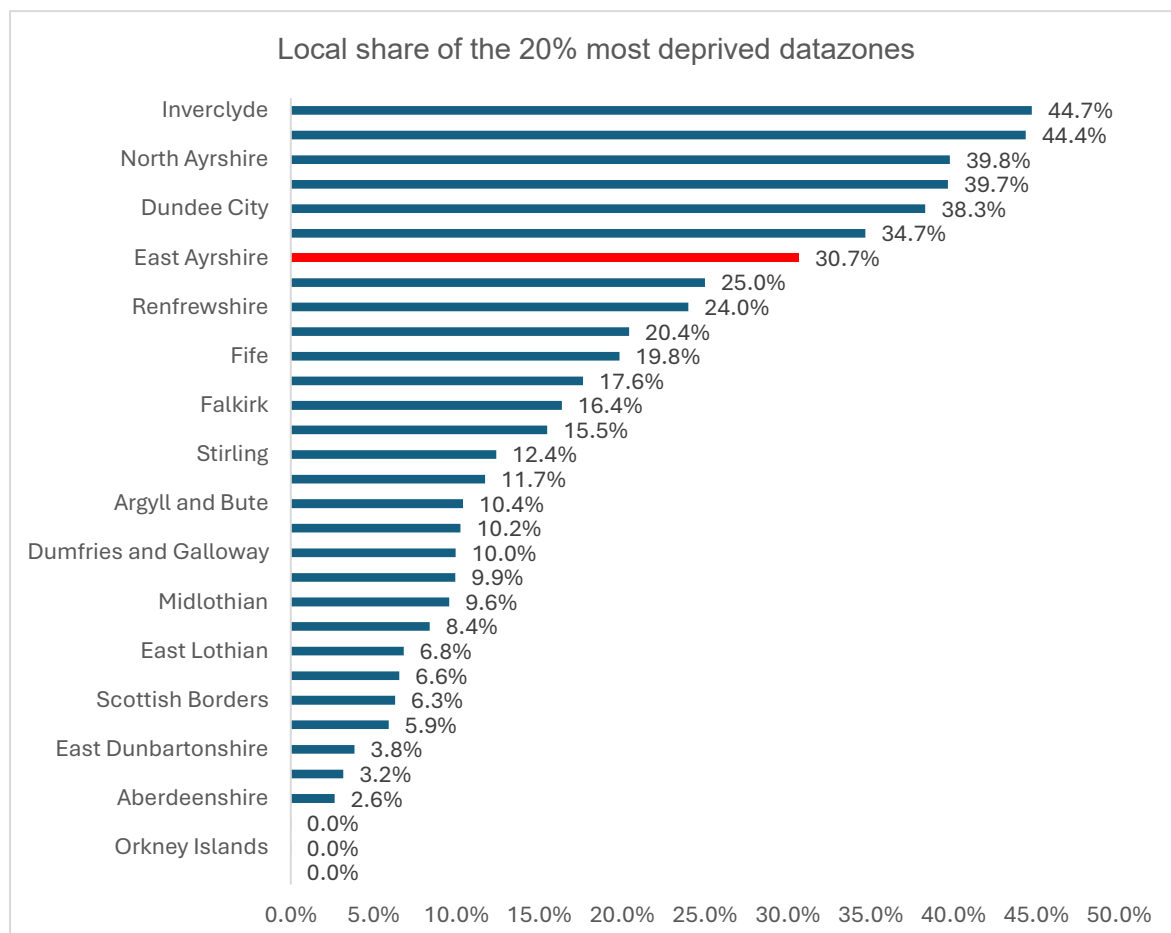
According to Scottish Government, Poverty is measured at the household level with all income taken into account. The Scottish Government recently published a poverty measurement methodology summary which can be found here - [Poverty measurement methodology: summary - gov.scot](#)

This strategy aligns with the Scottish Government definitions of poverty which are:

- **Relative Poverty** – this compares living standards of the poorest against the rest of the population and if people are keeping up with growth in average income.
- **Absolute Poverty** – this measures whether income is growing in line with inflation.

### Poverty Landscape in East Ayrshire

Poverty and inequality are a stark reality for many individuals, families and communities across East Ayrshire. Overall, East Ayrshire is classed as the 7th most deprived local authority area in Scotland and has been stagnant in and around this position for nearly 10 years.



### Households claiming Universal Credits

#### **26.2% of households are claiming Universal Credits**

In East Ayrshire, 26.2% of households made claims to Universal Credits in March 2025, compared to a figure of 20% across the UK. The highest number of these claims in East Ayrshire were made by single person households (13.5%) and single person households with children (8.3%).

### Child Poverty

#### **23.6% of children are living in poverty**

23.6% of children in East Ayrshire are living in poverty after housing costs compared to the national average of 21.2%. Research highlights specific groups of children who are at significantly greater risk of poverty (see Appendix 2), however it is also estimated that around 70% of children growing up in poverty, live in households where at least one adult is in work, highlighting the prevalence of low income, working-family poverty.

### Unemployment Rates

#### **4% of working aged adults are unemployed**

In East Ayrshire, 4% of working-age adults (16 to 64 years old) are unemployed for the period 2024/25. This figure exceeds the national average of 3.4% recorded during the same timeframe.

### Long-Term Sick

#### **43.2% of adults are economically inactive due to long-term sickness**

In 2024/25, 43.2% of economic inactivity was attributable to long-term sickness, compared to 34.6% in Scotland. This figure represents an increase of 6.8 percentage points since 2023/24, while the Scottish average rose by only 1.9 percentage points over the same period.

### Healthy Life Expectancy

#### **In East Ayrshire, females are expected to have 55.4 years and males 55.8 years in healthy life.**

From 2021 to 2023, Healthy Life Expectancy in East Ayrshire dropped to 55.4 years for females and 55.8 years for males, both below the national averages of 60 and 59.6 years respectively. This marks a decline from 2019-2021, when estimates were 59.9 for females and 56.8 for males.

## Lived Experience

The landscape of poverty in East Ayrshire is both complex and varied. Gaining a thorough understanding of the local context through data analysis is critical for developing effective responses, accurately identifying priority groups, and allocating resources to areas of greatest need.

However, statistics only tell part of the story. They do not capture the full reality of what it means to live in poverty. As crucial as the numbers are to the success of the strategy, they cannot reflect the day-to-day struggles, the difficult choices families and individuals are forced to make or the impact on dignity, wellbeing and hope for the future. To ensure our strategy is rooted in the realities of local people, we have listened to and drawn upon the lived experiences of residents who encounter poverty in different ways. Their experience has, and will continue to, help us see the barriers people face and the changes that could make a difference.

<b>EAST AYRSHIRE CASE STUDIES</b>	
<b>Parent XX</b>	- Managing finances as a parent of neurodiverse children is a delicate balancing act that feels as though I'm constantly navigating a maze. Every decision feels weighted with consequences.
<b>East Ayrshire resident</b>	- I continue to fight for a future where support is available without judgment—a system that provides safety, empathy, and tangible help long before anyone has to reach such.
<b>East Ayrshire resident</b>	- I have been in and out of jail for the past 15 years due to my chaotic childhood and substance abuse. Each time I am released the support is inconsistent and never relationship based or focused.
<b>Parent XX</b>	- Accessing support for myself and my children has been a journey marked by both successes and profound challenges. The journey continues.
<b>Parent XX</b>	- I am on benefit, but I couldn't work with my money. I needed more than money...I find money difficult, I spend every last penny and have no safety net as don't know if I will be here tomorrow. Emotional poverty is so much worse than financial poverty. The social isolation...being cut off is hard. I can live on nothing & have had to. Richness is having support & folk around me.

Lived experience will remain central to this strategy. The formation of a Lived Experience Reference Group is essential to this approach, this allows the creation of a safe space for people to share their experiences without stigma and establish a sustainable support network for all to access. Although the group is currently in its early stages of development, specific details will be finalised in the coming weeks.

Once established, this group will play a key role in influencing and shaping decision-making, ensuring that the strategy is developed both by and for those experiencing poverty and inequality in our communities.

The quotes below are just some examples which reflect real experiences of East Ayrshire residents facing poverty and inequality daily:

*"It is hand to mouth. My local GP brought me food parcels up one time because I couldn't afford to eat. I was so mortified".*

*"Some mornings, when I wake up and face the reality of five children—two of whom struggle with autism and ADHD—the weight of the day already feels overwhelming".*

*"I've spent countless nights reworking budgets".*

*"I lost my apprenticeship because of addiction issues stemming from my childhood abuse and trauma. My life then descended into one of crime and chaos".*

*"My daughter and I are so scared at night because of the abuse we have suffered we need to sleep with the lights on and this significantly increases my electricity bills".*

*"I was homeless at 9 years*

*"My school attendance was poor because of my chaotic lifestyle and violence I experienced in my home".*

*My quality of life would be much better if I could get out & about and do more socialising and meet like-minded individuals. Relationships are important - I just want to be able to talk to folk".*

*"I need a network of supports that recognizes our challenges without stigma".*

*"There are times I cannot afford to eat myself, so I leave myself with nothing for days sometimes weeks, so my children have enough to eat and I suffer in silence until the unbearable hunger pains from my own stomach tires me down".*

*"I would really appreciate some financial help, that would help me maybe pay someone to come and spend time with me or cook. To feel safe that I could pay my funeral".*

## Development of the Strategy

In addition to the comprehensive review and analysis of all qualitative and quantitative data, the development of this strategy was based on employing an inclusive and evidence-based approach that further included:

- Attendance at national and local meetings to understand priorities and emerging themes.
- A review of relevant policies, legislation and published reviews to ensure alignment with statutory requirements and best practice.
- One-to-one discussions with key stakeholders to gather insights and expertise (see Appendix 3)
- Presentations to local elected members to test and refine priorities.
- Benchmarking against other areas to learn from good practice.
- A development session with community representatives to capture local perspectives and lived experience (see Appendix 3).

At every stage, this strategy has been shaped by Human Rights principles drawn from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR). These international frameworks establish the rights our citizens have to an adequate standard of living, work, social security, health, education, equality and non-discrimination, participation in public life, cultural inclusion and respect for privacy and family life.

Pivotal to the development of this strategy has been the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The UNCRC is an international human rights treaty that grants all children and young people (under the age of 18) a comprehensive set of rights. The UNCRC is the most widely supported human rights agreement in the world and sets out a holistic framework for the rights of all children. Governments are expected to do all they can to implement the UNCRC to make sure all law, policy and decisions which impact on children from birth to 18 comply with the human rights.

As a child-centred organisation, the UNCRC provides the Council with a platform to help us determine if we are improving and promoting the wellbeing of children. The UNCRC is underpinned by four guiding principles which are general requirements for all children's rights:

- Non discrimination
- Best interests of the child
- Right to live, survival and development
- The right of children to express their views and have them given due weight

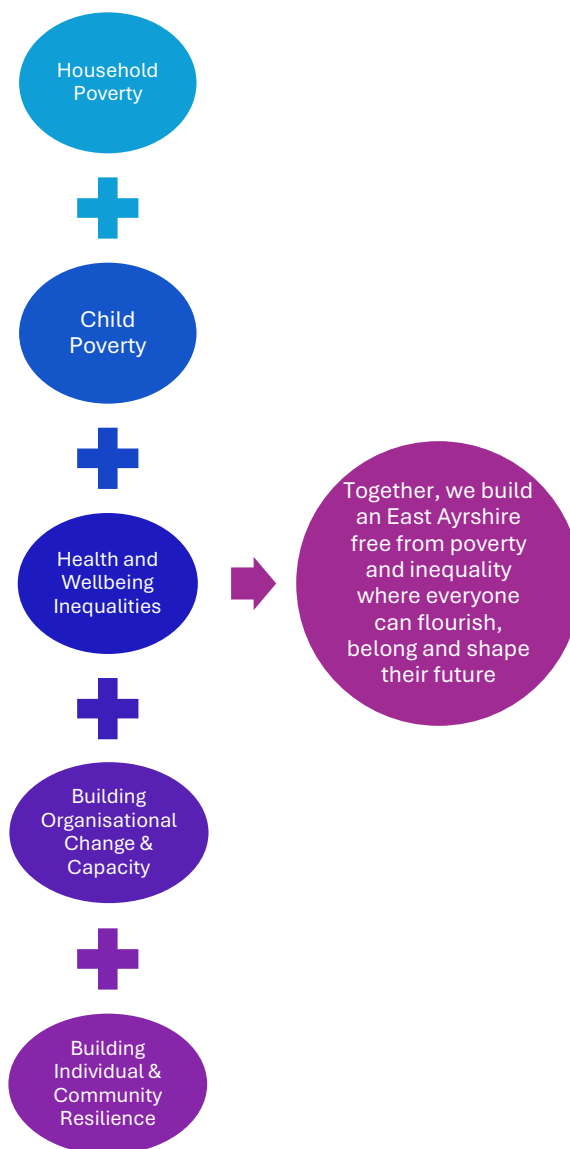
This approach to the development of the strategy ensures that it is rights-based, well-informed, collaborative, and reflective of statutory obligations, national direction and local need.



## Strategic Themes

Our Vision, Mission and Values set out the kind of future we want to create in East Ayrshire. To turn that ambition into reality, we will focus on five strategic themes. Each theme is important in its own right, but they are all interconnected and inextricably linked – progress in one depends on progress in the others. Together, they provide a framework for collective action and lasting change.

### Five Interconnecting Themes – One Vision



## Theme 1: Household Poverty

Many families and individuals face persistent insecurity due to low incomes, rising living costs, and barriers to services. Income and employment are critical to lifting individuals, households – and children – out of poverty. Reducing household poverty improves quality of life, prevents crisis situations, and enables people to live with dignity and stability.

Strategic Objectives:

### **1. Maximising Income**

- Support individuals on their journey into secure, fairly paid work
- Tackle in-work poverty (zero-hour contracts/low pay/benefits trap)
- Ensure access to all entitlements and maximum benefits take-up

### **2. Reducing Financial Pressures**

- Reduce costs of and create access to affordable housing, fuel, food, childcare and transport
- Enhance financial wellbeing by facilitating access to affordable credit and providing defined pathways to advice and support.
- Tackle the 'poverty premium'

### **3. Better Access to Services**

- Make support accessible, equitable and joined-up
- Deliver services with dignity and without stigma

## What Success Looks Like: -

Individuals / households have higher incomes and secure work.

Individuals/households can afford the essentials – housing, food, fuel, childcare and transport without being pushed into financial hardship.

Fewer households experience debt-related challenges and report increased confidence in managing their finances with improved access to fair and affordable financial options when necessary.

Services are accessible to all and delivered without stigma, ensuring people feel respected and supported.

## Theme 2: Child Poverty

Experiencing poverty during childhood can significantly affect health, education, and long-term prospects. While issues related to family income and employment are addressed in Household Poverty, children require tailored support to enhance their wellbeing, learning, and resilience. Our commitment is to ensure that every child and young person has access to the resources necessary to break the cycle of poverty, flourish, and fulfil their potential, with targeted support for those most at risk, such as young carers and children in care.

Strategic Objectives:

### **1. Supporting Wellbeing and Development**

- Promote children's physical/mental health, including access to play, recreation and enrichment
- Ensure early access to childhood services and routine health checks, providing support as soon as it is needed
- Provide preventative support and proactive interventions to reduce disadvantage with targeted support for children most at risk, including young carers and those in care

### **2. Enabling Learning and Achievement**

- Ensure equitable access to resources for education and skills
- Reduce hidden costs of learning, and provide additional financial assistance as required in a respectful and non-stigmatising manner.
- Expand digital inclusion and positive pathways

### **3. Building Resilience for the Future**

- Build confidence and self-esteem
- Involve children in decision making
- Equip young people to thrive into adulthood
- Support children affected by poverty to stay safe, stable and connected, avoiding entry into the care or justice systems.

## What Success Looks Like: -

Children enjoy  
better health and  
wellbeing

Young people  
succeed in  
education/training

Children feel  
confident, resilient  
and valued

Fewer children  
enter poverty in  
adulthood

Reduced justice /  
care entry linked to  
poverty

### Theme 3: Health and Wellbeing Inequalities

Health and poverty are closely linked. Long term conditions, poor mental health, and unhealthy lifestyles can limit people's ability to work, participate in their communities, and live fulfilling lives – often trapping them in cycles of disadvantage. In East Ayrshire people living in our most deprived communities experience poorer health and shorter life expectancy than those in more affluent areas. This theme focusses on supporting people to manage and improve their health, reduce inequalities in health outcomes and promote social inclusion and interaction so that everyone can live well for longer.

Strategic Objectives: -

#### **1. Building a Healthy Workforce**

- Support people to access stable and meaningful work recognising employment as a key driver of wellbeing
- Promote workplace health initiatives and reduce barriers to sustaining employment for those with health conditions
- Encourage employers to adopt practices that improve physical and mental health across the workforce

#### **2. Investing in Wellbeing Communities**

- Strengthen community-based approaches to health and wellbeing, making services accessible and inclusive
- Expand opportunities for physical activity, social interaction, volunteering and community connections
- Reduce isolation and loneliness by supporting inclusive, safe and welcoming spaces for people of all ages

#### **3. Bridging the Gap – Tackling Different Health Outcomes**

- Reduce health inequalities between communities by addressing the wider determinants of health (housing, income, environment)
- Target support to those with the poorest health outcomes, ensuring fair access to services and resources
- Work in partnership to increase life expectancy and improve quality of life for people in deprived areas

## What Success Looks Like: -

More people in East Ayrshire are supported to stay in or move into fair, healthy employment.

Communities provide strong networks of support, helping people feel connected and included.

People report better physical and mental health, with reduced isolation.

Gaps in health outcomes and life expectancy between the most and least deprived communities are narrowed.

## Theme 4: Building Organisational Change and Capacity

Tackling poverty and inequality cannot be achieved by one organisation alone. It requires strong collaboration, clear leadership, and a shared commitment across all partners. Building organisational capacity means ensuring that services are joined-up, resources are targeted where they are most needed, and decision making is rooted in evidence and community voice. Embedding a culture of fairness, dignity and equality across organisations is essential to driving long-term change.

Strategic Objectives:

### 1. Embedding a Whole-Systems Approach

- Align local and national policies to ensure coherent action on poverty
- Promote joint planning, commissioning and service delivery across agencies
- Strengthen leadership and accountability for tackling poverty and inequality

### 2. Strengthen Capacity and Workforce Skills

- Invest in staff training and development to build understanding of poverty and inequality and enable frontline staff to identify those living in poverty
- Promote trauma-informed and dignity-based approaches in all services
- Ensure staff have the tools and flexibility to support individuals and households effectively

### 3. Using Evidence and Community Voice

- Improve use of data and real evidence to inform decision-making and target resources
- Benchmark against best practice to strengthen delivery and learning
- Embed poverty-proofing into the development of all new policies and strategies



### **What Success Looks Like: -**

Organisations in East Ayrshire work in a genuinely collaborative and coordinated way.

Staff across services have the skills and confidence to identify and tackle poverty with dignity and respect.

Policy and practice shaped by high-quality data, informed by lived experience and tested through poverty audits.

Resources are targeted effectively leading to better outcomes for households and communities.

## Theme 5: Building Individual and Community Resilience

Communities across East Ayrshire have strong assets, networks and traditions of mutual support. However, poverty and inequality can weaken these networks and limit people's ability to influence decisions that affect their lives. Building resilience is about strengthening connections, empowering individuals and communities and ensuring that the voices of those with lived experience are central to shaping action. By supporting people to feel valued, connected and influential, this theme builds the foundations for long-term change.

Strategic Objectives: -

### 1. Strengthening Social Networks

- Support community-led groups and activities that reduce isolation and build connections
- Invest in places and spaces where people can come together
- Promote peer-to-peer support and volunteering

### 2. Empowering Individuals and Communities

- Support individuals to build confidence, skills and leadership
- Strengthen community capacity to identify local needs and drive change
- Encourage participation in decision-making and service design

### 3. Listening to Lived Experience

- Create meaningful opportunities for people with lived experience of poverty to shape services
- Ensure feedback is acted on and visibly influences change
- Build trust by valuing lived experience as expertise

### **What Success Looks Like: -**

Communities are better connected, inclusive and supportive.

Individuals feel empowered to influence their own lives and local environment.

Decisions are shaped by people most affected by poverty.

East Ayrshire's communities are more resilient to social and economic pressures.

## Strategy at a Glance

Strategic Theme	Objectives	Outcomes
Household Poverty	Maximising Income  Reducing Financial Pressure  Better Access to Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals/households have higher incomes and secure work.</li> <li>• Individuals/households can afford the essentials – housing, food, fuel, childcare and transport without being pushed into financial hardship.</li> <li>• Fewer households experience debt-related challenges and report increased confidence in managing their finances with improved access to fair and affordable financial options when necessary.</li> <li>• Services are accessible to all and delivered without stigma</li> </ul>
Child Poverty	Supporting Wellbeing and Development  Enabling Learning and Achievement  Building Resilience for the Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children enjoy better health and wellbeing</li> <li>• Young people succeed in education/training</li> <li>• Children feel confident, resilient and valued</li> <li>• Fewer children enter poverty in adulthood</li> <li>• Reduced justice/care entry linked to poverty</li> </ul>
Health and Wellbeing Inequalities	Building a Healthy Workforce  Investing in Wellbeing Communities  Bridging the Gap – Tackling Different Health Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More people in East Ayrshire are supported to stay in or move into fair, healthy employment.</li> <li>• Communities provide strong networks of support, helping people feel connected and included.</li> <li>• People report better physical and mental health, with reduced isolation.</li> <li>• Gaps in health outcomes and life expectancy between the most and least deprived communities are narrowed.</li> </ul>
Building Organisational Change and Capacity	Embedding a Whole Systems Approach  Strengthen Capacity and Workforce Skills  Using Evidence and Community Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisations in East Ayrshire work in a genuinely collaborative and coordinated way.</li> <li>• Staff across services have the skills and confidence to identify and tackle poverty with dignity and respect.</li> <li>• Policy and practice shaped by high-quality data, informed by lived experience and tested through poverty audits.</li> <li>• Resources are targeted effectively leading to better outcomes for households and communities.</li> </ul>
Building Individual and Community Resilience	Strengthening Social Networks  Empowering Individuals and Communities  Listen to Lived Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communities are better connected, inclusive and supportive.</li> <li>• Individuals feel empowered to influence their own lives and local environment.</li> <li>• Decisions are shaped by people most affected by poverty.</li> <li>• East Ayrshire's communities are more resilient to social and economic pressures.</li> </ul>

## Alignment of Strategic Themes with National and Local Policy

Our strategy complements and reinforces national and local policies and priorities. The table below shows how each of our five themes are woven into Scotland's wider anti-poverty and wellbeing agenda while also reflecting East Ayrshire's own priorities and partnership commitments.

Strategic Theme	National Policy	Local Policy
Household Poverty	Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018 Scottish Welfare Fund Fairer Scotland Duty Fairer Scotland Action Plan (eradicating inequalities) Cost of Living (Tenant Protection) Act measures Fair Work First No One Left Behind 2024-2027 Strategic Plan Housing to 2040 Fuel Poverty (Targets, Definition and Strategy) (Scotland) Act 2019 Funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Fair Fares Review 2024	East Ayrshire Community Plan – Economy and Skills Theme (supporting employability and local income maximisation) Local Outcome Improvement Plan (reducing financial insecurity) Council Strategic Plan 2022-27 Tackling Poverty and Inequality Building a Fairer Economy Local Housing Strategy (2019-2024) Community Learning and Development Plan 2024-2027
Child Poverty	Scottish Government's Child Poverty Delivery Plan (Best Start, Bright Futures) The Promise (supporting care experienced children and their families) Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) National Improvement Framework Education Service Improvement Plan 2024-27	East Ayrshire's Local Child Poverty Action Report Children and Young Persons Services Plan (improving outcomes and reducing inequalities for children and Families) East Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership local Child Poverty Action Plan Local implementation of Girfec
Health and Wellbeing Inequalities	Public Health Scotland Strategy (reducing health inequalities) Mental Health Transition & Recovery Plan Drugs Deaths Taskforce recommendations Scotland's Population Health Framework 2025-2035 Health and Social Care Service Renewal Framework 2025-2035	East Ayrshire Wellbeing Delivery Plan HSCP Strategic Plan (improving health outcomes, tackling inequalities, prevention and early intervention)

Building Organisational Change and Capacity	Fairer Scotland Duty (requires consideration of poverty Impacts in strategic decisions) National Performance Framework (outcomes on poverty, health, wellbeing)	East Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership priorities (collaborative working, prevention) Transformation Strategy (capacity building, partnership, digital inclusion)
Building Individual and Community Resilience	Christie Commission Principles (empowerment, prevention, partnership) Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015	East Ayrshire Community Plan – Safer Communities and Wellbeing themes Locality Plans (community-led action and participatory Budgeting)

## How We Will Deliver the Strategy

The delivery of this Anti-Poverty and Inequalities Strategy is grounded in strong leadership, shared responsibility and meaningful community engagement. Our governance and delivery model ensures clear accountability while keeping people and communities at the heart of decision-making.

### Community Planning Partnership (CPP) Board

The East Ayrshire CPP Board provides the overarching framework and accountability for delivery. The Board ensures that tackling poverty remains a cross-cutting priority, embedded in their vision for East Ayrshire to be *“a place with strong, safe and vibrant communities, where everyone has a good quality of life and access to opportunities, choices and high-quality services which are sustainable, accessible and meets people’s needs”*.

The CPP Board will:

- Provide overall leadership and direction
- Hold partners collectively accountable for delivery and impact
- Track progress using the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) and the Anti-Poverty and Inequalities reporting framework.

### Strategic Oversight Group

Reporting to the CPP Board, the Strategic Oversight Group - consisting of various strategic partners from across the local authority area (see Appendix 4) - will lead and coordinate implementation of the Anti-Poverty and Inequalities Strategy. Its responsibilities are to:

- Translate the vision into focused priorities and actions.
- Provide strategic direction and ensure effective governance and reporting arrangement are in place
- Oversee progress across the five Tactical Working Groups
- Identify gaps in support and direct resources to areas of most need and demand
- Address barriers to delivery and ensure, joined-up, effective working across services
- Champion the voices of lived experience in shaping solutions

- Ensure consistent and ongoing engagement with Elected Members, delivery partners and communities
- Produce reports and regular updates on progress to the CPP Board

## **Tactical Working Groups**

Five Tactical Working Groups, each aligned to our strategic themes, will work collectively to turn the strategy into action. Together, these groups will:

- Develop and implement detailed action plans
- Coordinate resources and activity across agencies
- Share data, learning and best practice to strengthen impact
- Work directly with communities to co-design services and interventions
- Report progress to the Strategic Oversight Group



## Support and Enabling Functions

Alongside the formal delivery structure, a range of support functions will provide expertise and capacity to ensure effective delivery of the strategy. These include:

### **Lived Experience Reference Group**

Our approach recognises that tackling poverty and inequality cannot be achieved by institutions alone. Communities and people with lived experience are at the core of this structure, shaping priorities, influencing decisions and holding us to account.

### **Data Analysts**

Supporting the groups by providing the most accurate and up to date to support evidence-based decision making, monitoring outcomes and evaluating impact.

### **Communications Officers**

Ensuring clear and consistent messaging, promoting awareness and support available, and strengthening community engagement.

### **Community Engagement Staff**

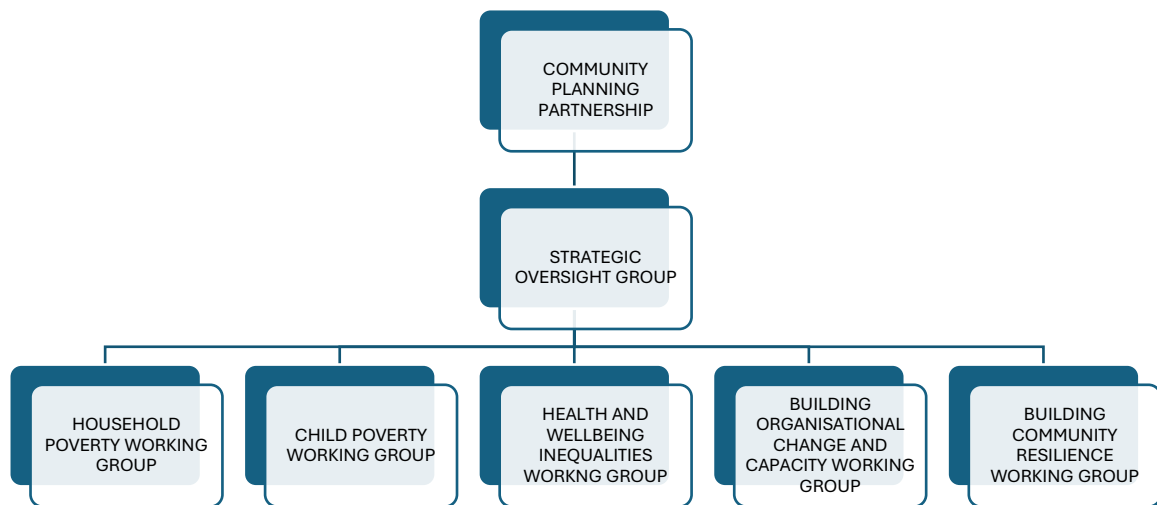
Facilitating meaningful, wider involvement of people with lived experience and all sections of the communities within East Ayrshire.

### **Secretariat Support**

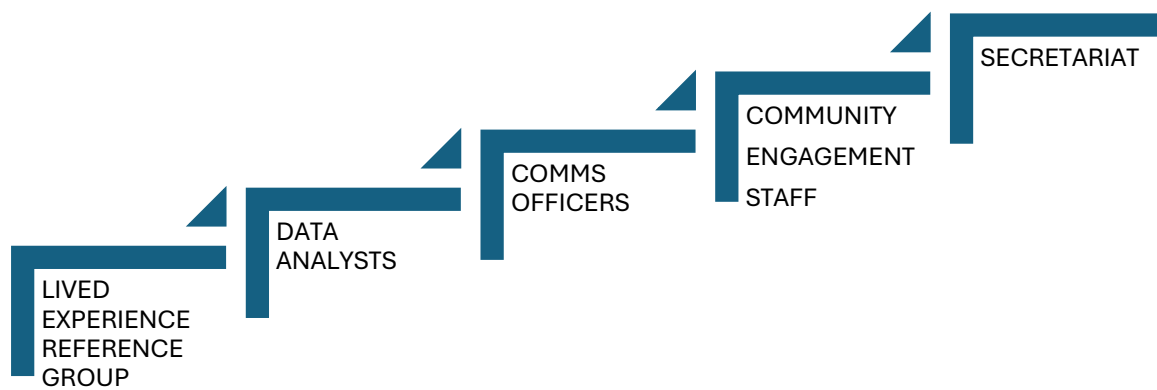
The Strategic Oversight Group and the Tactical Working Groups will be supported by a secretariat, which will ensure that meetings are effectively managed, all necessary documentation is circulated, and proper processes and governance are maintained. This includes accurate record-keeping and tracking the progress of action logs.

These support functions are not separate decision-making bodies but instead embed across the delivery structure, providing expertise to both the Strategic Oversight Group and the Tactical Working Groups. This will ensure all actions are well informed, well communicated and well connected.

## Delivery and Governance Structure



### *Supported By*



## Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation

### **Reporting**

Progress will be regularly reported to the CPP Board, Executive Oversight Group, Council and wider stakeholders ensuring accountability and transparency. Quarterly reports will provide key updates highlighting progress, achievements and challenges. Annual reports will summarise strategic progress including accessible summaries for the community. Dashboards will combine quantitative and qualitative data to give a clear picture of performance.

### **Review**

The Strategic Oversight Group will conduct regular reviews, at least quarterly, to assess whether activities are being delivered as planned and whether targets are being met. Reviews will examine risks, resource allocation, and barriers to progress, ensuring timely adjustments to interventions. Feedback from staff, partners and the lived experience reference group will be integrated to inform improvements and maintain alignment with strategic objectives.

### **Evaluation**

Process Evaluation – will examine how effectively activities and interventions are delivered including functioning of partnerships and organisational processes.

Impact Evaluation – will measure the difference made to households, children, health and wellbeing and community resilience using both quantitative and qualitative indicators.

Summative Evaluation – at the end of the strategy period will assess the overall success, document lessons learned and guide future planning. Evaluation findings will be shared with stakeholders and communities to ensure learning informs ongoing and future initiatives.

## Appendix 1

### ***Scottish Government Child Poverty Targets***

---

The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 sets in statute four ambitious interim targets to be met in 2023-24, with final targets to be met by 2030. These are that:

- Fewer than 18% of children living in families in **relative poverty** in 2023-24, reducing to fewer than 10% by 2030.
- Fewer than 14% of children living in families in **absolute poverty** in 2023-24, reducing to fewer than 5% by 2030.
- Fewer than 8% of children living in families living in **combined low income and material deprivation** in 2023-24, reducing to fewer than 5% by 2030.
- Fewer than 8% of children living in families in **persistent poverty** in 2023-24, reducing to fewer than 5% by 2030.

**Relative Poverty Target** – This means fewer than 1 in 10 children living in a household with an income below 60% of the UK median income after housing costs have been deducted.

**Absolute Poverty Target** – This means fewer than 1 in 20 children living in a household with an income below 60% of the UK median income and where living standards are not increasing in real terms over time.

**Combined Low Income and Material Deprivation Target** – This means fewer than 1 in 20 children living in low-income households (below 70% of the UK median after housing costs) who also lack four or more basic essentials like clothing, food, and social activities.

**Persistent Poverty Target** – This means fewer than 1 in 20 children living in households in poverty for at least 3 out of the last four years.

## Appendix 2

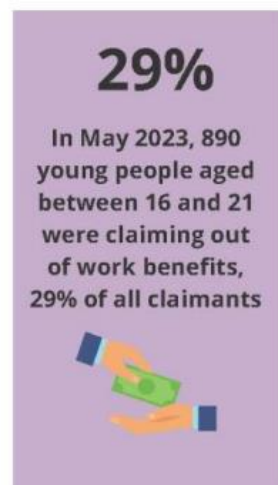
### ***Child Poverty Priority Households***

---

The household types identified as more likely to experience child poverty include:

- **Lone parent families**
- **Households where someone is disabled**
- **Families with three or more children**
- **Minority ethnic families**
- **Families with a child under one year**
- **Families where the mother is under 25 years of age**

It is reported that almost 9 in 10 children living in relative poverty in Scotland are in at least one of these 'priority' groups.



## Appendix 3

### ***Stakeholder and Community Engagement***

*The following stakeholders, organisations, and community groups participated in both individual and group discussions during the development of this strategy:*

- Eddie Fraser                      Chief Executive EAC
- Richard Grieveson              Depute Chief Executive EAC
- Linda McAulay-Griffiths      Director of Education and Skills EAC
- Craig McArthur                  Depute Chief Executive - Health Social Care Partnership EAC
- Jim Murdoch                      Senior Manager – Wellbeing, Planning & Performance EC
- Sina Currie                        Senior Nurse Manager, Integrated Children's Services EAC
- Gary Craig                        Strategic Lead, Housing & Communities EAC
- Joseph McLachlan              Director of Finance & Digital, EAC
- Pauling Minnery                Senior Manager Programme Management & Business Support EAC
- Theresa Mackin                Strategic Lead Ayrshire Roads Alliance, EAC
- Suzanne Clark                 East Ayrshire Leisure Trust
- Anneke Freel                    East Ayrshire Leisure Trust
- David McDowall                Head of Economic Growth, EAC
- Amy Fraser                      Corporate Support Officer, EAC
- Kara Heron                      Corporate Officer, EAC
- Lynne Buchanan                AA Public Health
- Lindsey Murphy                AA Health Improvement Lead
- Kathleen Winter                AA Public Health
- Laura Thompson                AA Health Improvement
- Michelle Kennedy               AA Public Health
- Hanna McCulloch              Improvement Service – National Child Poverty
- Nick Hopkins                    Independent Chair, Anti-Poverty Group, D&G
- Bobby Kelly                      Ayrshire Food Hub
- Cailean Tait                      Centrestage

- Charlotte Mitchell                      Ayrshire College – Equality & Diversity Lead
- Derek King                                Cumnock Juniors Community Enterprise
- Fraser Stone                               Cumnock Community Shed / CORRA
- George McMahon                        West Coast Furniture Bank
- Gordon McGuire                        Muirkirk Community Association
- Holly Bates                                Muirkirk Community Association
- Jamie Campbell                        Netherthird Community Action Training
- Janice Hendry                            Yipworld
- Jim McMillan                            Police Scotland
- John Moffat                               Hurlford Tool Library
- Jordan Allison                            The Killie Community Charity
- Kerrie Taylor                             The Nest
- Kirsty Ramage                            Bellsbank Project
- Lyndey Higgins                          EACH Recovery Matters
- Mary Laidlaw                            Ayrshire Food Hub
- Mercy McEwen                          Fossilfield Training Centre
- Natalie Carmichael                      The Nest
- Ronnie McEwen                          Fossilfield Training Centre
- Fiona Robson                            East Ayrshire Carer
- Fiona McMahon                        West Coast Furniture Bank
- The Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- National Child Poverty Peer Support Network

## Appendix 4

### *Strategic Oversight Group Membership*

---

- Independent Chair
- Depute Chief Executive – Communities and Economy
- Depute Chief Executive/Director – EAHSCP
- Ayrshire & Arran NHS Representative
- Service Representatives:
  - Housing and Communities
  - Financial Inclusion/Universal Credit Team
  - Health and Social Care
  - Social Work Services
  - Finance
  - Economic Growth/Employability
  - Facilities and Property Management
  - Education
- Department of Work and Pensions
- Public Health Scotland
- Ayrshire 360
- Third Sector Organisations
- Project Management Office