



Single Outcome Agreements 2009

An analysis by members of the Campaign
to End Child Poverty in Scotland

Summary

This report outlines the findings of an analysis by leading members of the Campaign to End Child Poverty in Scotland to identify the extent to which efforts to reduce child poverty were addressed in Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs) 2009. The key findings were:

Key findings

- **There was a lack of priority for tackling child poverty across SOAs.** Half of SOAs mention child poverty directly but only four SOAs explicitly stated that tackling child poverty is a priority and only two SOAs set a local outcome to reduce child poverty.
- **Explicit indicators for measuring progress in reducing child poverty lack ambition and urgency.** No SOA has set an outcome or indicator to end or significantly reduce child poverty. It remains unclear if local progress can be measured at a national level based on the current set of indicators used.
- **All SOAs discuss poverty and deprivation, yet it was difficult to identify strategic approaches to tackling child poverty (and poverty more generally) in SOAs.** Only one SOA refers to developing a child poverty strategy.
- **There is a lack of clarity regarding what policy areas are seen as contributing to reducing child poverty across SOAs which makes it difficult to draw overall conclusions on the extent to which child poverty is addressed in SOAs.**
- **SOAs, while of key importance, must be considered alongside other measures of progress in reducing child poverty at local and national level.**

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About the Campaign to End Child Poverty

The Campaign to End Child Poverty is made up of more than 150 organisations across the UK, concerned about the unacceptably high levels of child poverty in the UK. The goal of the campaign is to ensure that the Government keeps its promise to halve child poverty by 2010 and eradicate it by 2020. An informal group of leading members of the campaign in Scotland has been established amongst Action for Children, Barnardo's, Child Poverty Action Group, One Parent Families Scotland, Poverty Alliance and Save the Children.

1. Introduction

Single Outcome Agreements

- 1.1 In November 2007, the Scottish Government and local authorities in Scotland, agreed to a new relationship between the two spheres of government, based on partnership and joint accountability. The new way of working was set out in a Concordat.¹ A central element of the concordat was the replacement of ring fenced local government funding with block grants, whereby local authorities have more discretion over how they allocate their budgets.
- 1.2 Another central element of the concordat was the introduction of Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs). SOAs are the means by which Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) agree their strategic priorities for their local area and express those priorities as outcomes to be delivered by the partners, while showing how those outcomes should contribute to the Scottish Government's fifteen National Outcomes (part of the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework²). SOAs are agreed between each CPP and the Scottish Government. The first SOAs were produced in 2008. The second round were agreed in May 2009.
- 1.3 The Improvement Service issued guidance for developing the SOAs in 2009³. Key messages included:
- SOAs should focus strategically on priority areas for improvement and on the end outcomes to be achieved.
 - Addressing inequalities, and improving equality, in quality of life and opportunities in life is a national outcome in its own right, but also a cross cutting theme that should be considered across the SOA.
 - SOAs need to be clear what success will look like and how we will know we are getting there. At a minimum, we need to be clear how the end outcome is to be measured, and about how progress towards that will be monitored.
 - A 'golden thread' needs to run from the high level outcomes in the SOA through to the underlying planning, delivery and performance systems of all partners.
- 1.4 These changes created opportunities for engaging local authorities and their partners in tackling child poverty at local level but also raised a number of challenges and concerns for those working to end child poverty in Scotland:
- How to ensure that the shift from national to local prioritisation does not result in the loss of a strategic national approach and reduce the priority given to tackling child poverty.
 - That the amalgamation (and eventual removal) of ring fenced funds for tackling poverty will result in funding being absorbed into the main local government settlement and subsequently reduced.
 - That within the new National Performance Framework there is an absence of clear indicators and targets and reporting mechanisms which would enable local and central government to measure performance in eradicating child poverty at local level.

¹ Scottish Government & COSLA (2007). *Concordat between the Scottish Government and local government*.

² <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/11/13092240/9>

³ Improvement Service (2008) *Single Outcome Agreement (SOAs) Guidance 2009 & Key Messages*

Child Poverty Policy Context

- 1.5 240 000 children in Scotland are living in poverty. This represents nearly a quarter of all Scottish children.⁴ The Scottish Government has repeatedly expressed its commitment to tackling child poverty (and poverty more broadly) and is committed to eradicating child poverty by 2020. The need to tackle poverty is recognised at every level of the National Performance Framework. The approach is set in the context of the Scottish Government's Economic Strategy. The overarching objective of that framework is 'to create a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth'. The approach for tackling poverty set out in the Framework builds on two of the Economic Strategy's Golden Rules. The Solidarity Golden Rule seeks social equity by increasing the proportion of income earned by the poorest groups by 2017. The Cohesion Rule seeks equity of prosperity between all regions; the objective is to narrow the gap in economic participation between the best and worst performing regions by 2017. National Outcome 7 specifically addresses inequalities - *We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society*, and a number of other National Outcomes are relevant (2, 3, 4, 5 and 8).
- 1.6 The national approach for tackling child poverty is outlined across three joint Scottish Government and COSLA policy frameworks – '*Achieving our Potential – a framework to tackle poverty and income inequality in Scotland*'⁵, '*The Early Years Framework*' and '*Equally Well – a framework to reduce health inequalities in Scotland*'. The approach recognises the need to take a cross cutting approach to tackling child poverty that includes tackling income, education, health and housing inequalities and breaking the cycle of deprivation. The approach is based on the principle that child poverty is best tackled as 'part of a broader effort to reduce poverty and inequality in Scotland'. *Achieving our Potential*, develops the expectations around the role local government and their partners can play in meeting national anti-poverty and inequality targets.
- 1.7 Local authorities and their delivery partners have a crucial role to play in eradicating child poverty and ensuring the 2020 target is met. The success of the national strategy to eradicate child poverty will depend on the implementation and delivery of measures at local level. It is stated in *Achieving our Potential* that 'SOAs between the Scottish Government and CPPs will provide the vehicle for describing how poverty is being tackled at a local level'. This analysis, therefore, aims to examine the extent to which efforts to reduce child poverty are addressed in SOAs 2009.

2. Methodology

- 2.1 This analysis builds on the thematic analysis of SOAs 2009-10 produced by the Children's Voluntary Sector Policy Officers' Network. ⁶ Each SOA was examined according to what they said about tackling child poverty. Notes were taken on the content of each SOA against a number of themes and collated into table format. The table was amended from tables used in the Children's Voluntary Sector Policy Officers' Network analysis. The information was collated by three members of staff. Guidance was issued to all staff who collated the data for analysis in an effort to minimise inconsistencies in the identification of issues in the SOAs.

⁴ DWP (2009). *Households below average income 2007/08*. Department for Work and Pensions.

⁵ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/11/20103815/0>

⁶ *Single Outcome Agreements for Scottish Local Government 2009-10: A thematic analysis by the Children's Voluntary Sector Policy Officers' Network*

2.2 The analysis was carried out by one member of staff at Save the Children to ensure consistency in analysis. The analysis examined the extent to which efforts to reduce child poverty were addressed in SOAs and the extent to which the three broad policy areas set out in *Achieving Our Potential*, as they relate to child poverty, were covered in SOAs. The policy areas set out in *Achieving Our Potential* are:

1. Tackling income inequality – the analysis focused on employability and removing barriers to work.
2. Addressing the longer term measures to tackle poverty – the analysis focussed on tackling educational inequalities and breaking the cycle of poverty and inequality through early years services.
3. Supporting those experiencing poverty – the analysis focussed on the provision of advice services, fuel poverty and free school meals.

2.3 For each of these areas the analysis examined:

- The extent of coverage that each theme was given by the 32 SOAs.
- The national and local outcomes within which each theme was situated.
- The local indicators used to measure performance against outcomes.
- The types of issues discussed under each theme and the identification of any common issues or gaps.

2.4 The findings should be treated with some caution. They are based on our analysis and understanding of child poverty. Tackling child poverty requires action in a number of different policy areas, therefore SOAs may contain information on how they are addressing child poverty but have not explicitly stated that this is what they are doing. Due to time and resource constraints we were not able to analyse how all policy areas that impact on child poverty were addressed in SOAs, for example housing.

2.5 Issues affecting children, young people and families are covered extensively in the SOAs – see the thematic analysis of SOAs 2009-10 by the Children's Voluntary Sector Policy Officers' Network for further detail.

3. Findings

3.1 This section of the report outlines the findings of our analysis to identify the extent to which efforts to reduce child poverty were addressed in SOAs 2009. This analysis situates child poverty in the context of broader approaches to tackling poverty at local level, as this is the approach taken in *Achieving our Potential*. The discussion starts with a general discussion of how poverty is covered at a strategic level in SOAs before moving on to discuss how child poverty is addressed at a strategic level. This is followed by a more detailed analysis of how the three broad policy areas set out in *Achieving our Potential*, as they relate to children, were translated into SOAs.

i) The extent to which poverty was covered in SOAs

3.2 All SOAs discuss poverty and/or deprivation. However, the extent to which poverty is covered in SOAs differs considerably. Our analysis found that fifteen⁷

⁷ Aberdeen, Argyll and Bute, Dundee, East Lothian, East Renfrewshire, Edinburgh, Falkirk, Inverclyde, Moray, Orkney, Renfrewshire, Shetland, Stirling, West Dunbartonshire

authorities state that tackling poverty and deprivation is a strategic priority in their area, while other SOAs refer to tackling poverty in a limited way or as one of several priorities. The majority of SOAs refer to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) as the key source of evidence in identifying the most deprived communities in their areas. The information from this source is used extensively in the local area context sections of SOAs.

3.3 Only nine SOAs⁸ make reference to having or developing local anti-poverty strategies. It is unclear from SOAs what priority tackling child poverty will have in local anti-poverty strategies. Only six SOAs refer directly to *Achieving our Potential*. Of these six, the majority made passing reference to the document, while one SOA (West Dunbartonshire) stated that they were working to embed *Achieving our Potential* into their SOA. This suggests that the framework has not been a key strategic document in developing the 2009 SOAs. However, there is evidence that the aspirations and vision of the framework were included in some SOAs that do not mention the framework directly.

3.4 Twenty SOAs set local outcomes to reduce poverty or deprivation. The outcomes were generally very broad, for example reduced poverty, fewer people are living in poverty or improve the quality of life in the most deprived areas. The indicators used to measure these local outcomes were more often than not fairly generic. The most frequently used indicator relates to tracking the number of households experiencing multiple deprivation using the SIMD index. Ten SOAs measure poverty using an indicator of multiple deprivation, related to the SIMD. Other indicators refer to income levels of individuals. It is difficult to ascertain from these local outcomes (and SOAs more generally) what policy areas and issues – other than income- they consider as key factors in tackling poverty and deprivation.

3.5 Tackling poverty is most frequently discussed in relation to National Outcome 7 – We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish Society. Interestingly, very few SOAs refer directly to poverty in relation to National Outcome 2 – We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people.

ii) The extent to which child poverty was covered in SOAs

3.6 Only half of SOAs make specific reference to child poverty. The extent to which child poverty is covered in SOAs varies considerably. Most SOAs that mention child poverty directly refer to it in the context of low income and employability issues. A few discuss child poverty in a broader sense and note how growing up in poverty can impact on a range of outcomes for children. A couple of SOAs mention child poverty in relation to child protection.

3.7 Only four SOAs⁹ noted child poverty was a priority issue in their area. As with tackling poverty more broadly, it was difficult to identify what policy areas and issues, other than low income, CPPs consider as key factors in tackling child poverty. It is therefore difficult to identify strategic approaches to tackling child poverty and indeed whether some SOAs were engaged in addressing child poverty. There were examples of where an SOA makes no explicit reference to child poverty in the local context sections but the approach taken in the SOA outlines a strong strategy for reducing poverty and improving children's wellbeing. Five SOAs included a local outcome or indicator on child poverty but did not refer to the issue in the local context sections. Conversely, there were examples of where SOAs explicitly discuss child poverty in the context sections but this is not followed through

⁸ Renfrewshire, West Dunbartonshire, Perth and Kinross, Argyll and Bute, Dumfries and Galloway, Glasgow, Stirling, Fife, East Ayrshire

⁹ Falkirk, Glasgow, Shetland and West Dunbartonshire

into local outcomes or indicators. Five SOAs made reference to child poverty but did not include a specific local outcome or indicator related to child poverty. At a strategic level, only one SOA refers to developing a child poverty strategy.

3.8 The vast majority of SOAs (eleven) see reducing child poverty as addressing National Outcome 7 – we have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society.

Tackling child poverty is also seen as relevant to meeting National Outcomes 2, 4, 5, 6 and 8 (see table 1). A number of authorities related tackling child poverty to more than one national outcome, for example Stirling's SOA links reducing the number of children living in poverty to four National Outcomes – 2, 5, 7 and 8. The range of National Outcomes under which local authorities refer to child poverty illustrates the cross cutting nature of the issue.

Table 1

National outcome Number	National Outcome	Number of SOAs referring to child poverty in this outcome
2	We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people	3
4	Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens	1
5	Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed	4
6	We live longer, healthier lives	1
7	We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society	11
8	We have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk	6

3.9 Only two SOAs¹⁰ have set local outcomes specifically to reduce the number of children living in poverty in their areas. Both these SOAs highlighted child poverty as a priority area. In total fourteen SOAs listed local indicators to measure progress in reducing child poverty under broader local outcomes. The local outcomes can be categorised into four themes – reducing poverty and inequality; giving children the best start in life; improving communities and tackling health and employability (see table 2).

Table 2

Key themes for local outcomes that indicators for addressing child poverty are referred to under	Number of SOAs
Reduce the number of children living in poverty	2
Reduce poverty or inequalities	5
Children and young people have the best start in life	3
Communities	3
Health and employability	1

3.10 Just fourteen SOAs listed local indicators to measure progress in reducing child poverty. A number of different local indicators were used to measure

¹⁰ Glasgow and West Dunbartonshire

progress (see table 3). Despite there being no official national indicator for child poverty at local authority level, thirteen of the fourteen SOAs that have an indicator to measure child poverty used an income proxy indicator. The most commonly used set of indicators measure the percentage of children living in low income households (in and out of work). The Scottish Government's recommended child poverty proxy at local authority level is the most frequently used indicator – *the percentage of children in each Local Authority that live in households dependent on out of work benefits or Child Tax Credit more than the family element*. This indicator measures both in and out of work poverty. The second most frequently used set of indicators were ones that measure the number of percentage of children living in workless households. This is a concern given that nearly half of all children living in poverty live in a household where at least one parent is in work. One SOA has set a general measure of the number of children living in poverty (it is not clear if this will be measured on an income only or mixed measure). Only one of the fourteen SOAs that include an indicator explicitly on child poverty used a non income measure - increase the number of young people from families experiencing poverty or disadvantage who are receiving free, discounted or supported services.

3.11 Interestingly, one SOA (Glasgow) has set a local outcome to reduce the proportion of children living in poverty, yet the indicators used to measure this were not child specific. Glasgow uses three indicators to measure child poverty – the proportion of working age residents claiming key benefits, the number of key benefit claimants and the proportion of households with a bank account. It is also interesting to note that Glasgow has removed the Scottish Government's recommended child poverty proxy indicator from its SOA this year (it was included in their 2008 SOA).

Table 3

Indicator	No of SOA using indicator
Indicators that measure the % of children living in low income households (in and out of work)	7
- % of children living in households that are dependent on out of work benefits or Child Tax Credit more than the family element.	6
- % of children living in low income households.	1
Indicators that measure the number of children living in workless households.	5
- % of children living in workless households	1
- Number of children (0-15) dependent on a recipient of Income Support and Jobseekers Allowance	2
- Proportion of working age residents claiming key benefits	1
- No more than 25% of children living in households that are dependent on benefits	1
Number of children living in poverty.	1
Increase the number of young people from families experiencing poverty who are receiving free, discounted or supported services.	1

3.12 The targets set to measure progress in relation to these indicators were in all cases very vague, lacked ambition and a sense of urgency. The target against all but two of the fourteen indicators were very vague and simply stated that the target is to 'reduce'. One SOA set a target to 'sustain' the current number of children living in low income households rather than a reduction. The other SOA stated that it will 'monitor' the indicator but did not set a target. In short, there appears to be no sense of urgency in tackling child poverty in the SOAs that include a specific indicator to measure child poverty.

It should be noted that with the exception of two, the local authorities with the highest levels of child poverty in Scotland (25% and above) have included an income proxy child poverty indicator. To identify this SOAs were cross referenced with the Campaign to End Child Poverty data on levels of child poverty at local level.¹¹ However, the two local authorities with high levels of child poverty that did not include an explicit indicator for measuring child poverty did prioritise tackling poverty more broadly throughout their SOAs. A couple of local authorities with the lowest rates of child poverty in Scotland included an indicator for child poverty in their SOA.

iii) The extent to which the three broad policy areas set out in *Achieving Our Potential*, as they relate to child poverty, were covered in SOAs

3.13 This section of the report analyses the extent to which the three broad policy areas set out in *Achieving Our Potential*, as they relate to child poverty, were covered in SOAs. The policy areas set out in *Achieving Our Potential* are:

- a) Tackling income inequality – the analysis focused on employability and removing barriers to work.
- b) Addressing the longer term measures to tackle poverty – the analysis focussed on tackling educational inequalities and breaking the cycle of poverty and inequality through early years services.
- c) Supporting those experiencing poverty – the analysis focussed on the provision of advice services, fuel poverty and free school meals.

a) Tackling income inequality

3.14 Reducing income inequality was identified as a priority in the majority of SOAs. Twenty SOAs contain indicators or local outcomes that specifically measure income poverty. Various indicators were used to measure progress on tackling income poverty. Indicators included a reduction in the number of households with very low incomes, increasing household incomes and reducing the gap in household incomes between the median and lower deciles. Nineteen SOAs¹² contain an indicator that specifically measures average median earnings in an area (some authorities distinguish between median male and female earnings). However, many of these indicators do not in themselves measure income inequality. In nearly all cases this indicator is referred to under National Outcome 2.

3.15 Employability was a strategic priority in all SOAs, with the exception of one. This is perhaps unsurprising given the context of the economic recession and rising unemployment. There was a clear focus throughout the SOAs on supporting people in to work and off benefits. This could mean that individuals and families are moving from out of

¹¹ Glasgow, Dundee, Fife, Inverclyde, North Ayrshire, West Dunbartonshire, West Lothian and West Lothian <http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/why-end-child-poverty/poverty-in-your-area#scotland>

¹² Aberdeenshire, Dumfries and Galloway, Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, Angus, Edinburgh, Outer Hebrides, Highland, Inverclyde, Midlothian, Moray, Orkney, Perth and Kinross, Renfrewshire, Dundee, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, Falkirk, Glasgow and Shetland.

work to in work poverty (i.e. from out of work benefits into low paid jobs) rather than lifting people out of poverty. Twenty seven SOAs referred to reducing the number of individuals/ households claiming out of work benefits. Twenty two SOAs contain an outcome or indicator related to supporting people into work. The indicators referred to either skills training, gaining qualifications, literacy and numeracy rates or use of employability services. The National Outcomes under which these outcomes and indicators were referred to were 2 and 7. While the focus at a strategic level in SOAs appears to be supporting people into work, only a couple of SOAs referred to job retention and progression, again a concern given the scale of in work child poverty.

3.16 There was a focus on the employability of young people in the SOAs. Less attention was given in SOAs to supporting parents, or specific groups of parents e.g. single parents into work. The majority of SOAs made the links between better employment prospects and life chances for young people and economic potential. The *More Choices, More Chances* strategy was frequently cited in the SOAs. Twenty three SOAs contained an indicator or local outcome on helping young people into employment, further education or training. The majority used the official Scottish Government indicator – the % of school leavers in positive destinations (education, employment or training). Supporting young people into employment was most commonly referred to under National Outcomes 2, 3 and 4.

3.17 A few SOAs referred directly to addressing barriers to work, however they did not provide a great deal of detail on how this would be achieved or what barriers they would focus on. Childcare is a major barrier for many parents in entering and remaining in work (particularly single parents). Only one SOA (Aberdeen) included a specific local outcome and indicator on childcare in relation to employability. Aberdeen's local outcome - set out under National Outcome 2 - is '*the provision of affordable, accessible, quality childcare is available across all sectors, with priority given to developing provision in regeneration areas*'. The indicator used to measure this is the 'number of places (will include school care places, breakfast club and holiday play schemes)'. A target has been set to increase the number of places by 10% by 2011/12. A further five SOAs included local indicators on childcare but these were not specifically related to employment, rather they related to supporting vulnerable families and supporting children in the early years (see section below).

b) Addressing the longer term measures to tackle poverty

3.18 Any strategy to eradicate child poverty must include action to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and address the longer term drivers of poverty. Therefore, tackling inequalities in education and supporting children in the early years are key areas that require action at local level. This analysis examined the extent to which these two issues were covered in SOAs 2009-10.

Educational inequalities

3.19 The SOAs had a strong focus on education and the strategic focus of Curriculum for Excellence is clear. There was strong and growing evidence of the links between poverty and low educational outcomes. In Scotland, the educational attainment of the lowest performing 20% of pupils (many of whom live in poverty) has not improved in recent years despite improvements for the remaining 80% of pupils. Therefore, tackling educational inequalities should be a priority at local level.

3.20 Only twelve SOAs included a local indicator to address educational inequalities or improve the educational attainment of the lowest attaining 20%.

The most common indicator was 'attainment or tariff score of lowest performing 20% of

pupils at the end of S4'. Only one SOA has a specific indicator to 'reduce the gap in attainment between the lowest attaining 20% of pupils and the remaining 80%'. One SOA has an indicator to 'improve the educational attainment of pupils in the most deprived areas'. Six SOAs have listed this indicator under National Outcome 4, three under National Outcome 7 and two under National Outcome 2. One SOA related reducing educational inequalities to three National Outcomes - 3, 4 and 5. The majority of SOAs that prioritised tackling educational inequalities linked tackling this to addressing wider inequalities, breaking the cycle of poverty and employability. The number of young people not in employment, education or training was highlighted as a priority issue in many SOAs and linked to employability and education (as discussed in the income inequality section of this report). However, the SOAs do not explicitly define tackling educational inequalities as part of the strategy to eradicate child poverty. It is possible that other local authority areas are tackling educational inequalities but not in a targeted way. In Dundee's SOA, for example, there is no targeted approach to reducing educational inequalities although it could be taken to be implied by the overall tone of the SOA. Therefore, it remains unclear as to whether SOAs alone will be able to adequately measure progress in reducing educational inequalities across Scotland.

Breaking the cycle through early years support

3.21 The majority of SOAs made reference to the Early Years Framework. Early years was most commonly discussed in relation to giving children 'the best start in life', but its role in tackling inequalities and 'breaking the cycle' of deprivation also features in several SOAs. Despite several SOAs discussing early years in the context of 'breaking the cycle' of deprivation, only one SOA referred to breaking the cycle of poverty through early years support under National Outcome 7. It was difficult to assess the level of prioritisation within SOAs given to breaking the cycle of deprivation. For example, many SOAs also discussed avoiding dental decay (at times using this as a proxy for measuring deprivation) and it was difficult to identify the priority given to each issue.

3.22 A small number of SOAs included indicators which specifically target vulnerable groups, for example the percentage of vulnerable children receiving early years services such as Sure Start.¹³ However, it was not clear from these SOAs whether children living in poverty were included within the definition of 'vulnerable groups'. There was a lack of attention across SOAs in relation to assessing and enhancing childcare and out of school care – key services that supports low income parents in entering and remaining in work – and a medium term priority in the Early Years Framework.

3.23 The links between tackling poverty and early years support were not explicit in the majority of SOAs and therefore it remains unclear as to whether SOAs alone will be able to adequately drive and measure progress in implementing the Early Years Framework as it relates to breaking the cycle of poverty.

c) Supporting families in poverty

3.24 Supporting those experiencing poverty is central in the Scottish Government's approach to tackling poverty. There are a number of ways in which local government can support families living in poverty. This analysis focussed on the extent to which the provision of advice services, fuel poverty and free school meals were covered in SOAs.

¹³ Davidson, E (2009) *Single Outcome Agreements for Scottish Local Government 2009-10: A thematic analysis by the Children's Voluntary Sector Policy Officers' Network*. SCCYP

3.25 There is only limited detail in the SOAs of the priority given to supporting families living in poverty. Seven SOAs have an indicator or local outcome on tackling fuel poverty. Only six SOAs have indicators or local outcomes on the provision of advice and support services (mainly in relation to maximising income). These SOAs mentioned the need to ensure that those on benefits are claiming everything to which they are entitled and maximising their income through benefits and advice provision. Just one SOA referred directly to increasing the number of young people from families experiencing poverty or disadvantage who are receiving free, discounted or supported services. The indicators used to measure this were listed as the number of young people claiming Free School Meals and School Clothing Grants. In addition, only four SOAs had indicators or outcomes that aim to maximise the up take of Free School Meals – a direct support service for families experiencing poverty.

One SOA (Borders) clearly prioritised the provision of advice services to support families living in poverty. The Scottish Borders SOA contained six indicators for measuring the use of benefit advice services (particularly through the Citizens Advice Bureau services).

4. Conclusion

4.1 The extent to which child poverty was acknowledged in SOAs varies considerably, for example, one SOA makes repeated references to child poverty and identifies a local outcome to reduce the proportion of children living in poverty, whereas another merely identifies poverty as one of nine factors which impair the life chances of young people at risk. There was often a disconnect in the way the issue was discussed and the local outcomes and indicators used. It was very difficult to assess the priority given to child poverty in SOAs due to the cross cutting nature of the issue and the lack of clarity regarding what policy areas are seen as contributing to reducing child poverty. While, on the one hand, child and income poverty can be easily measured and compared, it was more difficult to measure and assess broader outcomes for children living in poverty across education and early years. We support the recommendation in the Scottish Parliament's Local Government and Communities Committee report on Child Poverty that *there should be a local outcome on tackling child poverty in each annual single outcome agreement*.

4.2 The explicit indicators that were set in relation to child poverty, lack ambition and a sense of urgency for tackling child poverty. We support the use of the Scottish Government's preferred indicator to measure progress in reducing child poverty at local level but believe that far more ambitious targets must be set to meet the 2020 target of eradicating child poverty. There is a need to use better data at local level on child poverty and related outcomes. Clear indicators that measure progress for children living in poverty at local authority level need to be identified and agreed. It will remain difficult to measure progress on reducing child poverty at a national level until the indicators used in SOAs become more consistent.

4.3 There does not appear to be a particularly strategic approach to tackling poverty identifiable in many SOAs. However, there were exceptions. It may be that many authorities are doing a lot to tackle child poverty, but there was a lack of clarity regarding what policy areas were seen as contributing to reducing child poverty. The extent to which the main policy areas outlined in *Achieving our Potential* were covered in SOAs varies considerably. Income inequality and employability were covered most comprehensively. There was least coverage of supporting those experiencing poverty. Assessing the coverage of longer term measures to tackle poverty and the drivers of low income was more complex. Improving childcare provision appears to be a key gap in SOAs and was clearly not seen as a strategic priority. Further analysis of local anti-poverty

strategies (or indeed whether these exist) and following the 'golden thread' from the SOA to local action may provide further insight into the priority given to tackling child poverty at local level. **This analysis shows that SOAs, while of key importance, must be considered alongside other measures of progress in reducing child poverty at local and national level.**

This analysis was undertaken by Barnardo's Scotland, Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland and Save the Children.

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