

Appendix 2: Better Off: West Lothian Anti-Poverty Strategy

Pockets

We believe that nobody should go without the basic essentials we all need on a daily basis such as food, clothing and warmth. We aim to protect those in our society currently experiencing poverty from its worst impacts by maximising financial entitlements and reducing pressure on household budgets among low income families.

Outcome 1: *Maximise financial resources of households on low incomes*

What do we want to achieve?	How will we do this?
We want to maximise financial entitlements for families on low incomes by advice and support agencies working together.	We will support individuals and households to maximise income through benefit entitlement advice, pre-claim support and assistance to make claims and challenge unfair decisions
We want to improve access to information, advice and self-help through digital channels.	<p>We will work with partners to provide a range of online information and resources and self-help guides</p> <p>We will work with partners to make sure that everyone has access to information and advice to support people into opportunities to gain skills, access learning opportunities and upskill.</p> <p>We will produce a regular e-newsletter to share information about key welfare changes and where to access support</p>
We want to ensure that professionals in customer facing roles are aware of key issues affecting low income households and are aware of the services that are available to help and support individuals experiencing poverty or financial difficulty.	<p>We will upskill employees of the council and partners through ongoing training opportunities to raise awareness of poverty, access to support and advice and to ensure that customers, where possible, only tell their story once to get the help they need</p> <p>We will develop an on-line referral tracking system so that frontline staff will be better able to help customers to access services</p>

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People experiencing poverty can struggle to cope with increasing costs of living and often pay more for the same basic goods and essentials than more affluent households. We aim to address this 'poverty premium' by improving awareness and increasing access to a wider range of options for people in poverty.

Outcome 2: *Reduce out-going costs and the 'poverty premium' on low income households*

What do we want to achieve?	How will we do this?
We want those most at risk of poverty or financial exclusion have access to an appropriate level of advice and support through a range of targeted activities	<p>The One2One project will offer a named advisor to individuals with long term mental ill health to meet their multiple and complex advice needs</p> <p>The Prevention Intervention Money Advice Service will support pregnant women and parents of children up to one year old</p> <p>The Macmillan advice service will work with customers diagnosed with cancer and their families</p> <p>The Pensioner Income Maximisation Service will work with customers reaching state pension age</p> <p>We will support households moving into a new tenancy with information, advice and practical support</p> <p>Campaigns and projects will be developed in response to identified need</p>
We want individuals to be able to cope financially with changes in their personal circumstances through income maximisation at key life stages; moving home, moving into or out of work, having a baby or after a bereavement	<p>New tenant benefit checks will be offered to all council tenants moving into a new home</p> <p>We will offer individuals engaging with employability services a referral for a benefit check when moving into work or recently out of work</p> <p>We will offer individuals registering a birth or death through West Lothian Council registration services a referral for a benefit check</p>

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Prospects

Poverty restricts the opportunities available to people leaving them locked in situations they may find impossible to get out of. We aim to ensure that everyone is valued, can contribute and be part of their community.

Outcome 3: *Households on low incomes are managing finances appropriately and becoming financially resilient*

What do we want to achieve?	How will we do this?
We want West Lothian residents to have access to affordable credit solutions and savings options to meet the needs of low income households	We will support a range of affordable credit and savings options from responsible lenders including local credit unions and Conduit Scotland which focus on supporting low income households who are particularly vulnerable to high cost lenders
We want low income households to have the skills and knowledge to maintain a stable financial position and work toward a more secure financial future	<p>We will work with individuals experiencing or at risk of financial exclusion to develop better money management skills, including budgeting and understanding credit and debt</p> <p>We will develop learning opportunities which increase financial capability skills by working closely with local colleges and training providers</p> <p>We will target work with those who are at particular risk, including 16-24 year olds and low income households</p>
We want over-indebted households to have access to appropriate money advice and support at as early stages as possible	We will increase access to money advice for households which have unsustainable amounts of debt before entering any statutory debt solution
We want individuals to be able to access advice and support from trusted organisations	We will encourage all advice providers to achieve or work towards the National Standards for Advice Providers to develop standards and competencies for advisers relating to financial capability

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Employment remains the key pathway out of poverty. Significant inequalities in employment and low pay still exist. There has been an increase in part time working and in the numbers of people working part time but wanting full time employment and for many work is not an option for a variety of reasons but they are keen to contribute in their community. We believe that appropriate opportunities should be available for everyone.

Outcome 4: *Improve the opportunities for adults from low income backgrounds to be in good quality, sustained employment*

What do we want to achieve?	How will we do this?
We will work toward West Lothian becoming an accredited Living Wage Region	We will promote the benefits of the Living Wage to local employers and encourage Community Planning Partners to work towards achieving Living Wage accreditation
We want people who are seeking work to be supported to increase their chances of finding suitable and sustainable employment	<p>We will work with Community Planning Partners through employability programmes to upskill more people to be able to gain better paid and sustainable jobs</p> <p>We will focus targeted employability support such as the Women onto Work programme to remove barriers to employment</p>
We will encourage people to develop skills, contribute to their own community and improve health and well-being through volunteering	<p>The council will work towards achieving the Investing in Volunteering standard</p> <p>We will co-ordinate volunteering opportunities within the council to make them more accessible</p> <p>We will support local charitable organisations to form a network to recruit and train volunteers, share resources and examples of best practice</p>
We will work with Community Planning Partners to identify insecure and unsustainable employment practices in West Lothian and consider how these can be addressed	<p>West Lothian Council will sign up to the 'Dying to Work' charter to ensure terminally ill employees are offered protection and peace of mind regarding their employment position</p> <p>We will investigate and develop initiatives to support those on zero hours contracts</p>

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Places

We all use public services to meet our daily needs. Being locked in poverty often restricts access to services for those most in need. We believe that the places we live and our financial situation should not act as a barrier to access. Increasingly, organisations are offering services and information online. There is a very real risk that people are left out, or left behind, by the very thing which has the power to connect us. We want to harness the kindness in our community to make a difference. Our aim is to address area-based factors which currently exacerbate the effects of individual poverty for many families.

Outcome 5: *Low income households are able to access services and be socially and financially included*

What do we want to achieve?	How will we do this?
We want individuals with health problems or disabilities to have access to advice and support from a range of services at a time and place to meet their needs	<p>We will ensure that 'Advice on Prescription' is available by providing support at local health settings including GP surgeries and St John's Hospital alongside sessions with key organisations</p> <p>We will explore the feasibility of 'social prescribing' to support primary care services to refer patients with social, emotional or practical needs to a range of local, non-clinical services</p>
We will poverty proof public services to remove barriers faced by people experiencing poverty or financial difficulty	<p>All West Lothian schools will undertake poverty-proofing exercises to address barriers experienced by low income families associated with the cost of the school day</p> <p>We will carry out a mapping exercise of all digital support available to West Lothian residents and increase the opportunities for help, support and learning in new technology</p> <p>We will explore the feasibility of introducing free travel cards targeted at low income households, particularly to support those seeking work and moving into work</p> <p>We will work with partners to co-locate and automate processes to support the most vulnerable</p>

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A safe, warm place to live is a basic right that nobody should go without. Poverty can limit the choices and housing options available. We want everyone to feel secure in their home.

Outcome 6: *Increase the number of people who live in warm, affordable homes*

What do we want to achieve?	How will we do this?
We want West Lothian residents to be able to secure housing that is affordable and are supported to sustain their tenancies	<p>We will provide advice and support for tenants in private rented accommodation following the introduction of the Private Residential Tenancy in Scotland</p> <p>We will provide advice and representation for customers who wish to access the First Tier Tribunal Housing and Property Chamber to resolve housing disputes</p> <p>We will continue to build new, affordable housing and ensure that social housing stock is of a high standard</p>
We want households with a low income to be able to adequately furnish and equip their homes	<p>We will work with third sector organisations to reduce the number of households who do not have the necessary furniture, goods and equipment to live well in their home</p>
We want households experiencing fuel poverty in West Lothian to be supported to reduce fuel costs, maximise income and improve energy efficiency.	<p>We will increase the number of individuals who engage with targeted take up campaigns so that the value of income is maximised and the value of reduced consumption following advice is maximised</p> <p>We will explore potential solutions to address higher fuel costs for those with the lowest income</p>

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People

Poverty is a real problem that impacts our whole society. We believe in talking openly about hardship in our communities and working together to move towards a future free of poverty. We can solve poverty by loosening its grip on people and creating opportunities for children to thrive.

Outcome 7: Reduce the number of children living in relative poverty

What do we want to achieve?	How will we do this?
We want low income families to be able to access sufficient food to ensure that fewer children experience food insecurity	We will improve awareness of free school meals and breakfast clubs with the aim of increasing uptake We will identify practical ways for families to meet their extra food needs during school holidays We will work with food projects to consider how we improve access to fresh produce including dairy, fruit and vegetables We will decrease reliance on foodbanks by working with households experiencing persistent food insecurity
We want low income families to be aware of financial support that may be available and are supported to access this	We will increase awareness of school clothing grants and Education Maintenance Allowance and improve uptake We will work with nursery providers to consider how we reduce the cost of transition from nursery to primary school We will work with partners to help low income families access the new Best Start Grant
We want families at highest risk of experiencing poverty to receive targeted support to improve their financial outlook	Targeted campaigns will be undertaken: Families from Syria settling in West Lothian; Lone parents and young parents; Parents and carers of children with disabilities; Families with three or more children; Looked after young people, families with kinship care arrangements and care leavers
We want funding and resources to be available to support initiatives to address child poverty	We will explore the opportunities for participatory budgeting to support child poverty Grant funding will be provided to third sector organisations to support families
We want partners to work together to ensure families have access to a wide range of support	We will work with NHS Board and other stakeholders to test interventions and ideas We will work towards automated entitlement to benefit We will work with third sector and social enterprises to offer additional support to low income families

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We believe in showing kindness and compassion towards everyone in our society. We can solve poverty together by providing support to the most vulnerable when they need it and by building strong communities that ensure everyone can break free of poverty.

Outcome 8: *Increase opportunities for local people to fully participate in their communities and bring about change*

What do we want to achieve?	How will we do this?
We want individuals with experience of poverty or low income to have opportunities to have their voices heard and participate in their community	<p>A panel of volunteer 'Experts by Experience' will be recruited to ensure that local people with experience of poverty or financial difficulty have a platform through which to voice their opinions and suggestions</p> <p>We will engage with local communities to identify opportunities to become more active within their area</p> <p>We will work with Carnegie UK and the Kindness Network to support individuals to become more integrated and part of their community</p> <p>We will work with partners to ensure that local residents concerns about poverty and financial exclusion are represented within local Regeneration Plans</p>
We want change the way we speak about poverty and create a better understanding of what it means to be poor	<p>West Lothian Council will commit to using poverty sensitive language in corporate communications by reaffirming our pledge to the Poverty Alliance 'Stick your Labels' campaign and encourage partners to sign up</p> <p>We will consult with the 'Experts By Experience' panel to help us to look at language and labelling to reduce stigma</p> <p>We will incorporate the findings from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Frameworks Institute to change perceptions and understanding about poverty</p>
We want to allocate funding and procurement of resources to take into account the potential impact on poverty	<p>All voluntary and community sector organisations seeking funding from the council's voluntary grants budget to demonstrate how they will use the funding to reduce/mitigate the effects of poverty, isolation and loneliness</p> <p>West Lothian Council will continue to work with businesses and employers to get additional community benefits from procurement processes</p>

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