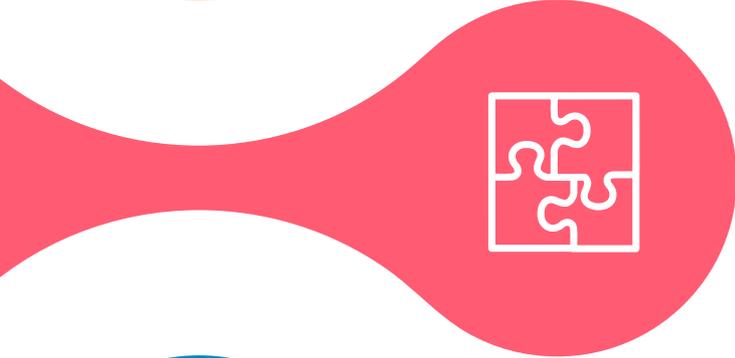


Anti-Poverty Strategy

2018/19 to 2022/23



Taking Action for **change**



Foreword

West Lothian should be a place where everyone has the chance of a decent and secure life. Persistent low income is much more damaging for families and individuals than brief spells on low income. Knowing who is being trapped in poverty and who is escaping is crucial to efforts to turn around lives and target resources.

The Community Planning Partnership's Anti-Poverty Strategy was developed in 2012 and set out a five year strategic plan to address poverty between 2012 and 2017. The Anti-Poverty Strategy was clear about the need to reduce the inequalities gap and tackle the causes of inequality to ensure that people are not financially excluded.

As the current strategy has reached the end of its life, a new Anti-Poverty Strategy has been developed for 2018/19 to 2022/23 to take into account the changing world and better reflect the challenges, constraints and opportunities available to the council and its partners. A key theme of the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan is tackling inequality and the new Anti-Poverty Strategy is key to helping the Community Planning Partnership work towards this. In shaping this strategy we have listened to our residents, our community planning partners and the third sector to help understand the causes and impacts of poverty.

With the ongoing impacts of the economic situation, the roll-out of Universal Credit and the delivery of the Welfare Reform programme upon the most vulnerable in our community, support must be provided to help residents to tackle and mitigate the impacts of poverty. The updated strategy sets out the Community Planning Partnership's ambition to work collaboratively and take positive steps to address the financial pressures felt by our residents, to ensure that tackling poverty is at the centre of their work within West Lothian. Together we can "take action for change" and all work together to reduce poverty.

We would like to take this opportunity to offer our thanks to all those involved in the development of the strategy, in particular to those people and groups experiencing poverty, and look forward to working with you to help mitigate the impacts of poverty in West Lothian.

Councillor Kirsteen Sullivan
Chair of the Community Planning Partnership Board



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1 Introduction

Poverty is a problem that we must work together to solve. Right now in West Lothian, thousands of people are locked into poverty and it is increasing as more and more people are struggling to get by. Together, we can make sure that everyone has a decent standard of living and the same chances in life.

Poverty restricts the choices people can make leaving them in difficult situations. The constant stress it causes can overwhelm people, affecting emotional wellbeing and can lead to poor mental health depriving those affected of the chance to play a

Four out of five low paid workers fail to escape low pay after ten years

Source: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

full part in society. The reality is, almost anyone can experience poverty. Unexpected events such as bereavement, illness, redundancy or relationship breakdown are sometimes all it can take to push us into circumstances that then become difficult to escape. With rising costs and unstable work, more and more families cannot always put food on the table and are locked in a daily struggle to make ends meet, unable to think about a different future.

Our community agrees that finding a solution to poverty is important. As part of the 2017 'Transforming Your Council' consultation, respondents placed 'minimising poverty, the cycle of deprivation and promoting equality' third out of the eight priorities set by the council to improve the quality of life. The consultation also received comments which included support for the proposal to bring teams together in a new anti-poverty service, along with suggestions and ideas on how to mitigate the effects of poverty. It is clear that the people of West Lothian want to live and work in a community which believes in helping and protecting the most vulnerable.

The strategy has been collaboratively designed with engagement and support from local people. Over 450 individuals and more than 15 community groups and partner organisations have participated in surveys and focussed discussions about poverty and inequality. Additionally, over 45,000 comments received through the Transforming Your Council consultation have been analysed to identify opinions, good ideas and suggestions. Further feedback was gathered

from 456 professionals in customer facing roles through a programme of poverty awareness training. This strategy is the result of careful consideration of the current landscape and the changing nature of poverty, combined with the voices of local communities, organisations and people with direct, lived experience of poverty.

There are four key priority areas; Pockets, Prospects, Places and People. Some focus on short term interventions whilst others will take longer to embed and achieve and some are beyond the scope of the Community Planning Partnership and will require us to lobby the Scottish and UK Governments to bring about change. Some of the actions focus on things that individuals and communities can do themselves, whilst others will require organisations to work together. The strategy is built around practical and achievable outcomes based on what we know already works locally and what we have learned from other

30% of working age people cannot afford to pay into an occupational or private pension

Source: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

areas about what works well elsewhere. If we are to succeed, there needs to be an emphasis on intervention, prevention and collaboration across council services, partners and the third sector to deliver better outcomes.

Given the economic and financial challenges the Council and partners face, which are not of their own making, limited resources will need to focus on the most vulnerable. The council and its partners will work collaboratively to utilise resources to make the biggest impact. If we are to make a difference, then this vision must be shared amongst everyone who lives and works in West Lothian. A key element will be to keep the focus on poverty and inequalities and therefore there will be a continuing campaign to raise awareness.

Childcare and housing are two of the costs that take the biggest toll on families' budgets. When you account for childcare costs, an extra 130,000 children are pushed into poverty

Source: End Child Poverty

1.1

What do we mean by poverty?

There are four main measures of poverty in Scotland. These indicators are embedded in the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act, and are closely linked to the considerations public bodies are required to make as part of the Fairer Scotland socio-economic duty.

Measure of Poverty	Meaning	Scottish Government Child Poverty Target by 2030
Relative poverty households with net incomes of less than 60% UK median household income, in the same year	Relative poverty measures how the income of the poorest households compares to average incomes	Less than 10% of children in Scotland should be living in relative poverty
Absolute poverty households with net incomes of less than 60% of UK median household income, in the base year (2010/11), adjusted for inflation	Absolute poverty looks at how the income of the poorest households compares to average incomes over time to track how income is keeping pace with rising costs	Less than 5% of children in Scotland should be living in absolute poverty
<p>Persistent poverty</p> <p>Households experiencing relative poverty for three years out of four</p>	<p>The longer someone lives with poverty, the deeper the impact. Persistent poverty tracks how many families have experienced poverty for a significant period of time</p>	<p>Less than 5% of children in Scotland should be living in persistent poverty</p>
<p>Combined low income and material deprivation</p> <p>Households with income of less than 70% of the UK median household income who cannot afford basic necessities</p>	<p>This measure looks at the living standards of low income households and measures how many are unable to afford basic necessities such as housing costs, heating, food and home repairs</p>	<p>Less than 5% of children in Scotland should be living with combined low income and material deprivation</p>

A Poverty Profile of West Lothian is produced annually to measure local poverty trends. Appendix A gives statistics and analysis which will be used as our baseline figures. From this, indicators will be established.

1.2 Picture of Poverty

The evidence shows that certain geographical parts of West Lothian and certain groups of people are more disproportionately affected than other areas or groups by particular causes of disadvantage:

POVERTY IN WEST LOTHIAN:



Approximately **22%** of children in West Lothian experience poverty

West Lothian has a **76%** overall employment rate and residents earn on average **£519** gross weekly pay



Around **22,000** households in West Lothian (28%) are defined as fuel poor

The number of people out of work in West Lothian has fallen to **1.7%** (March 2017), however, in recent years, in-work poverty has become an increasingly significant issue with **59%** of adults experiencing poverty in Scotland living in working households.

West Lothian has 16 datazones in the 15% most deprived in Scotland

“Poverty isn't living. It's watching other people live while you just survive.”

We all aspire to live our lives free of money worries, safe in the knowledge that we can afford all of our essential day to day expenses with enough left over to cushion against unexpected costs and make some provision for the future.

Poverty acts like a current, pulling people into a life of financial insecurity that can impact on a person's health and wellbeing, opportunities and life chances. We asked people in West Lothian what they feel is the most difficult thing about living with money worries.

“Being on a zero hour contract means I worry week to week if I will get a shift”

“Zero hour contracts are horrendous for anyone looking to work and provide. There is a lack of secure employment opportunities”

We learned about the continuing job insecurity; temporary contracts, zero hour contracts and of being under-employed and not able to work enough hours to earn a decent living. In fact, 66% of children experiencing poverty in Scotland live in a household where at least one person is in paid employment.



“The hardest thing about living on a low income is the constant increase in the price of food and utilities and the lack of increase in wages.”

The escalating cost of living, affecting growing numbers, is hitting West Lothian particularly hard. The area remains a relatively low wage economy with the average full time weekly wage £519 in comparison to £547 in Scotland. A significant proportion of households are earning less than the average weekly wage; a quarter of West Lothian households earn less than £16,000 and approximately 38% earn less than £20,000.

1.3 Challenges and Opportunities

Tackling poverty and inequality in West Lothian must take account of significant challenges including:

- Public sector budget constraints
- Introduction of new statutory duties with challenging targets
- Introduction of the Scottish social security system
- Ongoing programme of welfare reform and in particular the impact of the full roll out of Universal Credit which commences in May 2018
- Low pay, not enough work and insecure contracts
- Lack of affordable housing
- Increased cost of living
- High levels of indebtedness particularly amongst young people
- Increasing ageing population and expected increase in births
- Anticipated increase in child poverty
- Stigma associated with being poor
- Access to affordable and sustainable childcare
- The introduction of the Carers (Scotland) Act
- The potential impact of the UK's exit from the EU

We live in a rapidly changing world and in order to overcome these challenges we must find new and innovative ways to work together and share resources in order to help those most in need.

Disadvantage is growing yet funding is shrinking. Because Scottish Government funding is not sufficient to meet ongoing costs it is estimated that West Lothian Council must make £65 million of budget savings over five years from 2018/19 to 2022/23. These levels of savings will require local government and its partners to work with communities in new ways to co-produce the services they need. Deciding who gets what requires difficult choices. The strategy aims to limit the impact these conditions have on reducing the life chances of people in West Lothian and to focus on what we can do to support the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

We also know that societies with large income gaps and greater inequality have poorer outcomes for health, education and social cohesion overall. If we help create the conditions where everyone is included, everyone will benefit. We need to find ways to challenge exclusion and the obstacles to social connection and opportunity, especially in education, living and working conditions. These are statistically the most significant areas which help, or hinder, people in living productive and satisfying lives.

West Lothian has considerable pockets of rurality and faces distinct challenges as a result. People may find it more difficult to access services (due to availability, digital problems, transport and distance) and, in some cases, may be unaware of what they are entitled to or what is available. Loneliness and isolation is a recurring theme for people, whether due to geography, circumstance or both. One of the big challenges that people living in poverty face is the stigma surrounding it. Although people do not choose to be in hardship, and a series of life events may have led them there, many still fear that they will be judged as a person, parent or potential employee for finding themselves in difficult circumstances. The stigma associated with the word 'poverty' might even get in the way of people seeking help. There is evidence that people from more affluent backgrounds find it difficult to relate to the problems faced by people from less affluent backgrounds, particularly if they have no lived experience of poverty. Without that understanding, people are less likely to be supportive of actions specifically targeted at tackling poverty and inequality.

We need to tell a different story and help the public believe that change is possible and that poverty can be solved.

2 Our Story So Far

Over the last five years, West Lothian has made great strides in reforming its economy, improving health outcomes and raising educational attainment. However, West Lothian is a community in which not everyone has the same chances in life. There are deep and persistent inequalities between different communities and groups of people, and almost one in five children experience relative poverty. We have already made progress in West Lothian but there is still much that can be done. The Better Off: West Lothian Anti-Poverty Strategy has helped us to drive forward initiatives that help loosen the chains of poverty and help provide people with more opportunities for a better future.

Improved access to advice and support for residents through the West Lothian Advice Network



Targeted intervention helped over 800 parents of young children maximise income and deal with debt

Youth unemployment addressed with over 1000 opportunities created through Steps N2 Work



Families of school aged children helped to access financial support and lunch and activity clubs developed in school holidays

Improved access to affordable credit through ongoing support for Credit Unions and the development of a new CDFI, Conduit Scotland



The updated Anti-Poverty strategy sets out how we will continue to work to tackle poverty in West Lothian over the next five years; reducing the differences in income and life chances between different parts of our community.

2.1 Our Approach

There is a need to spark a renewed and re-energised focus across the whole community, on the continued requirement to tackle poverty and stubborn inequalities, to transform people's lives. It is simply not right that we live in a society where so many are locked in poverty. Below the surface, people face distinct challenges which may seem surprising to those on the outside, looking in; the difference between the most affluent communities and those living in adversity is stark.

By age 3, a child born into poverty is significantly behind in their cognitive development - a gap which widens by the time they are 5

Source: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Throughout the course of the refresh of the Anti-Poverty strategy we have recognised that poverty and inequality are underpinned by structural factors in the labour market, housing market, social security system, public services, and the way individuals and families are supported in our communities. We consistently heard that simple things can make a big difference, such as how we relate to each other as human beings; seeing the person and not the issue; seeking to understand and

support, rather than to judge; stopping 'doing to people' and instead working with them to find the right solution; listening to people and acting on what is most important; and creating the conditions within our community where people are able to take responsibility and do more for themselves to pursue and achieve their own dreams and aspirations. We have used that insight to inform the actions in the strategy.



2.2 Review, Consult, Refresh



1. Review

To understand the strengths and challenges within West Lothian, we reviewed existing data, national and local strategies and looked at the work of other Fairness Commissions and anti-poverty strategies. Appendix B provides details of other strategies and plans which link to this strategy.

Levels of poverty and inequality have been well researched and documented over the years. It is not the intention to restate the existing evidence, or to repeat the issues highlighted in the numerous strategies developed to address them. We have drawn on this body of work to help interpret and identify priority areas.

2. Consult

We visited projects and organisations with direct experience of working with those most in need. (Appendix C sets out a list of those organisations which participated.) We have learned a great deal and are aware that many issues are common, for example, the growth in poverty among people both in and out of work, the impact of welfare reform and, in particular, the roll out of Universal Credit benefit, the lack of affordable housing, increased living costs and the increase in debt.

We have spent time listening to local residents, groups,

professionals, organisations and the insight we have gained has helped shape the strategy. We began this process in October 2017, inviting as many people as possible to share their personal and professional experiences and observations and, crucially, their perspectives on what needs to be different. Appendix B gives more detail on the people and groups we worked with and Appendix D gives an analysis of the information, ideas and suggestions we received.

3. Refresh

This refreshed strategy has taken the evidence we have gathered from consultation with local residents, community groups and organisations and balanced this against what we can realistically do locally in order to achieve our overall goals.

New statutory developments have also informed the direction of the strategy:

- The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 places duties on Community Planning Partnerships around local outcome planning and delivery, and allows community bodies a greater depth of involvement throughout all stages of community planning.
- The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 and the Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan places a duty on local authorities and health boards to report on local activity to reduce child poverty.

- The introduction of the socio-economic duty ensures that public bodies consider the impact on poverty and inequality when making major decisions.

The Poverty Profile of West Lothian pulls together a range of information, data and analysis to help partners and stakeholders to better understand the current landscape, identify gaps and to help focus resources on areas most in need. Partners and stakeholders found this to be extremely helpful in refreshing the strategy and want to use this to help forward plan, target resources and apply for funding. We will use the winter 2017 profile to create a baseline to measure whether we are making a difference and track our progress against outcomes we want to achieve (Appendix A).

3 Our Strategy

We are working towards a West Lothian where fewer people experience poverty, where no-one experiences destitution and where everyone has the opportunity to build a future free of poverty. Supporting the most disadvantaged in our society to progress and prosper is critical to achieving our vision.

Over the next five years, through this strategy we aim to:

- protect people in West Lothian from the worst extremes of poverty and deprivation
- enable and empower people to access opportunities to become financially resilient
- tell a different story about poverty and increase understanding and reduce the stigma

- work collaboratively with partners, and use our collective voice to lobby the Scottish and UK Government to bring about change

The focus of our work will be on those households that are:

- working but not earning enough
- not working and on a very low income
- just about managing; and
- those not managing at all

We will work towards these aims through a range of actions, working in partnership to target resources and share best practice. This activity is structured around the ‘pockets, prospects, places’ measurement framework adopted by the

Scottish Government Child Poverty Strategy with the addition of a fourth category, ‘people’ to cover the focus on partnership, collaboration and person centred services.





3.1 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*

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*

3.2 Prospects

Poverty restricts the opportunities available to people, leaving them locked in situations they may find impossible to get out of. For many people, work is not an option for a variety of reasons, but they are keen to contribute in their community. 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*

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.

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

3.3 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 where 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

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

3.4 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

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

3.5 Partnership

Working together is a crucial element of the strategy to spark a renewed and re-invigorated focus on the need to tackle poverty and inequality amongst our local communities and the services and organisations that serve them. In order to achieve this, there needs to be an emphasis on intervention, prevention and

collaboration across council services, partners and the third sector to deliver better outcomes.

Good communication through a range of methods is important to achieving this goal.

Improved practitioners' networks

Use of new technology and media channels to communicate about important issues

Involvement in national awareness campaigns

Training opportunities for all partners

Experts by Experience

A panel of volunteer 'Experts by Experience' will also be recruited to provide additional scrutiny of anti-poverty activity in West Lothian. The panel will be made up of individuals with lived experience of surviving on a low income or struggling to make ends meet.

The panel will aim to meet four times per year to scrutinise the progress of the action plan and will be consulted with via email or telephone as often as required to discuss issues of interest and potential new actions.

Our experts will also have the opportunity to get involved with anti-poverty activities in other ways:

- Involvement in events
- Involvement in designing materials to communicate about poverty
- Access to training and further volunteering opportunities to empower them to act as poverty champions in their local communities

3.6 Measuring Impact

By 2023 when this strategy reaches the end of its lifetime, we aim to:

<p>Increase the amount of benefit gained by customers through intervention and advice</p> <p><i>2022/23 target performance</i> £27 million</p>	<p>Deliver new social housing for West Lothian</p> <p><i>2022/23 target performance</i> 3,000 homes</p>	<p>Improve the percentage of new tenancies sustained for more than a year</p> <p><i>2022/23 target performance</i> 90%</p>
<p>Minimising poverty, the cycle of deprivation and promoting equality</p>	<p>Minimising poverty, the cycle of deprivation and promoting equality</p>	<p>Minimising poverty, the cycle of deprivation and promoting equality</p>
<p>Reduce the percentage of children living in relative poverty</p> <p><i>2022/23 target:</i> Less than 18%</p>	<p>Reduce the level of unsustainable personal debt through effective money advice</p> <p><i>2022/23 target performance</i> £10 million</p>	<p>Deliver a programme of support to close the poverty related attainment gap</p> <p><i>All schools poverty proofed by 2023</i></p>
<p>Delivering positive outcomes and early interventions</p>	<p>Minimising poverty, the cycle of deprivation and promoting equality</p>	<p>Minimising poverty, the cycle of deprivation and promoting equality</p>
<p>Increase the number of properties improved by the Home Energy Efficiency Programme Scotland</p> <p><i>2022/23 target:</i> 500</p>	<p>Increase the number of adults supported into work through council employability programmes in-year</p> <p><i>2022/23 target performance</i> 650</p>	<p>Improve the percentage of care leavers entering positive destinations after leaving school</p> <p><i>2022/23 target performance</i> 93%</p>
<p>Protecting the built and natural environment</p>	<p>Improving the employment position in West Lothian</p>	<p>Delivering positive outcomes and early interventions</p>

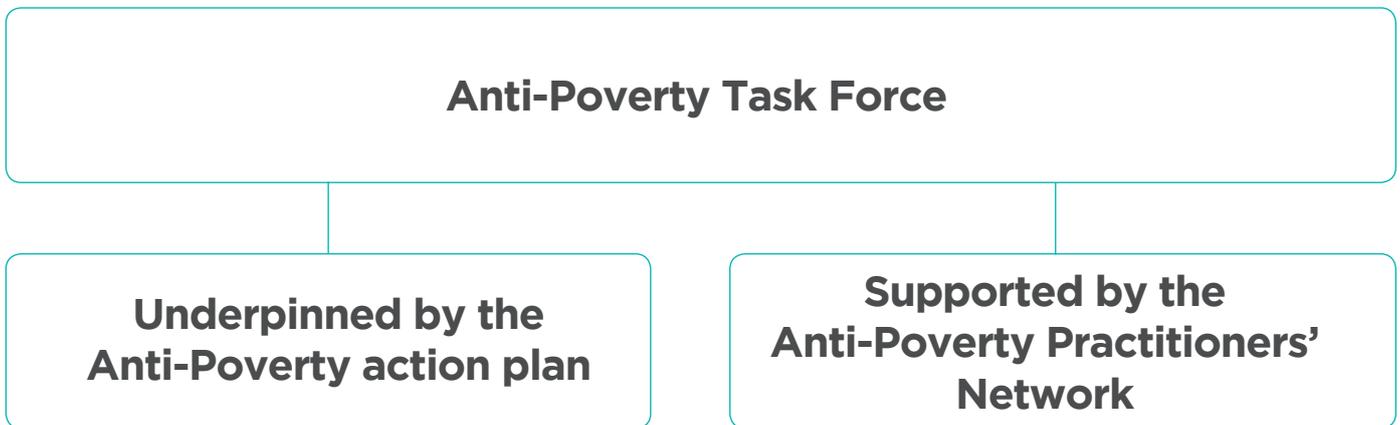
These aims link with the Corporate Plan which sets West Lothian Council's strategic direction, and identifies the priorities for the years between 2018/19 and 2022/23 and links with the strategic outcomes of the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan 2013-2023.

4 Governance and Reporting

The anti-poverty strategy has a clear structure of accountability. The Anti-Poverty Board responsible for overseeing the 2012-2017 anti-poverty strategy will be reviewed. There is a need to re-invigorate the membership and to consider strategically what will make the biggest difference in our communities. As part of the review, and to focus on collaborative working, the terms of reference will be refreshed to form an Anti-Poverty Task Force.

The strategy has identified eight outcomes it will be working towards over its lifetime. We will measure our success by creating key performance indicators with smart targets which will be monitored through our Anti-Poverty Task Force. This will be underpinned by a range of activities which will be developed into an annual action plan.

The action plan will be reviewed annually and progress monitored by the Anti-Poverty Task force and reported regularly to the Community Planning Board. This will be supported by a wide range of partners who will help the implementation of the strategy through a practitioners' network.



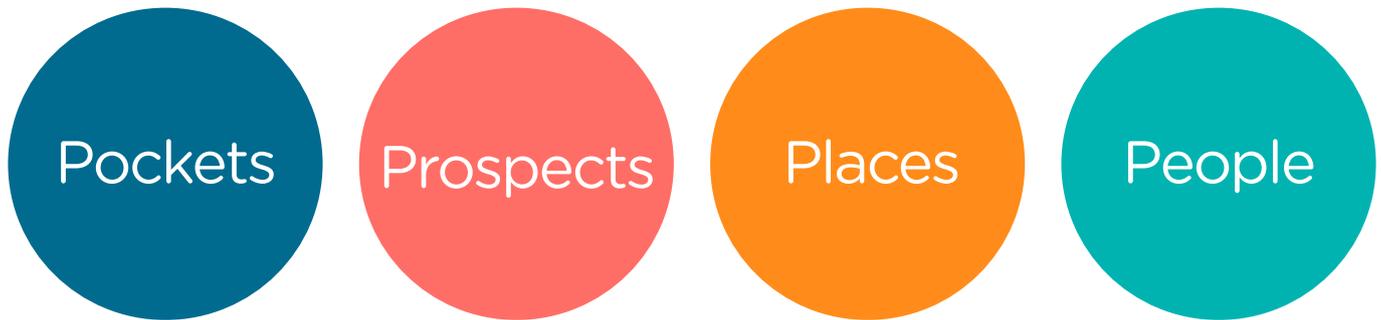
5 Summary

Over the lifetime of this strategy, West Lothian Council and its partners will face significant challenges in terms of budget constraints and difficult choices. The consultation feedback has shown the commitment and willingness to work together to reduce inequalities and poverty within West Lothian.

The Community Planning Partnership is committed to focussing our combined resources to reduce the numbers of people who fall into poverty, to limit the amount of time households remain in poverty, to reduce the impact for those who are experiencing poverty and to work with both national and local organisations to ensure that the stigma of poverty is eradicated.



Appendix A: Poverty Profile of West Lothian Winter 2017



1. Introduction - Poverty in West Lothian - A changing picture

The West Lothian Anti-poverty Strategy and Action Plan was launched in 2012 and it is appropriate, therefore, to review the changes in the key indicators that help to map the nature and scale of poverty in West Lothian.

Indicator	2012	Dec 2017	Change since 2012
Children and families			
Children in out of work families (1)	7,000	6,200	-800
Children in working households receiving Working Tax Credit (1)	8,700	7,900	-800
% of secondary school pupils registered for free school meals (3)	14.6%	16.4%	+1.5%
Working age people			
People in Work (4)	86,500	88,800	+2,300
Employment rate – aged 16-64 (4)	74.2%	76.4%	+2.2%
% aged 16-64 who are employees (4)	67.3%	68.2%	+0.9%
% aged 16-64 who are self-employed (4)	6.8%	7.8%	+1%
% residents earning below The Living Wage* (5)	18%	19%	+1%
Estimated number of residents earning below The Living Wage (5)	16,000	16,700	+700

Indicator	2012	Dec 2017	Change since 2012
Out of Work benefits			
ILO (International Labour Organisation) unemployment estimate (4)	7,000	3,600	-3,400
Claimant count (6)	4,010	1,835	-2,175
Aged 18-24 Claimants (2)	1,310	445	-865
Employment and Support Allowance and Incapacity Benefit recipients	8,800	9,130	+330
Lone Parents (Income Support) (2)	1,440	1,200	-240
Main out-of-work benefits	14,620	12,720	-1,900
Disability Living Allowance (2)	12,360	8,040	-4,320
Pensioners			
Beneficiaries of top-up benefit (2)	8,660	5,870	-2,790
% of beneficiaries of pension credit top- up (2)	31%	20%	-11%

Sources: (1) HMRC 2016 (2) DWP benefit claimants - working age client group; (3) Scottish Government, School Meals Survey; (4) ONS annual population survey; (5) ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings; (6) ONS Claimant Count *the Living Wage of £8.45 as per the Living Wage Foundation.

1.1

There is some evidence of in-work poverty shown by the estimated rate and number of residents earning below the living wage level. The latest figures for wage levels are for the period up to 6 April 2017. However, the number of children in households receiving Working Tax Credits has actually fallen since 2012.

There is also a small (1%) but noticeable increase in the number of secondary school pupils registered for free school meals, though this may be as a result of efforts to encourage registrations and uptake to those children who are eligible.

2 West Lothian in Context

West Lothian is in the centre of Scotland and has a mix of urban and rural communities, a significant jobs base in its own right and is well located relative to other parts of Scotland (especially to Edinburgh) for jobs and services. The area's recent economic history has been one of industrial change. In addition, the area

has experienced significant population growth, which is set to continue over the next 15 years. Housing development and associated population growth has benefited all parts of West Lothian.

Despite this generally positive local context, material poverty is still a significant issue for many households and communities. West Lothian, like many other parts of Scotland, experienced the impact of the credit crunch and subsequent recession – with substantial job losses and a rise in local levels of unemployment. The headline unemployment level has fallen since 2013, though the level may have bottomed-out. There is a concern that the medium term prospects might be less positive given the uncertain business climate and likely economic headwinds that are predicted by most commentators over the course of the next two to three years.

A common theme in relation to poverty and related indicators is that West Lothian as a whole is usually at or just below the Scottish average. This is illustrated by the summary statistics below.

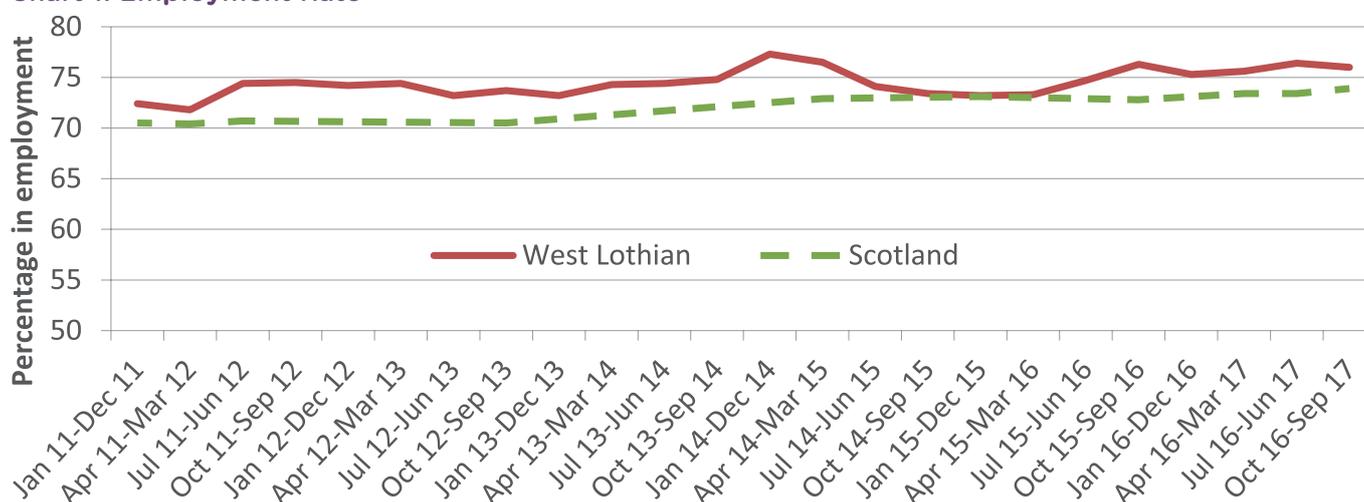
Table1: Summary Statistics		
Population (1)	180,130	
Area (2)	42,733 hectares	
Households (8)	80,000	
Businesses (2)	5,070	
Total Jobs (4)	78,000	
	West Lothian	Scotland
Population growth 2001-2016 (1)	13%	7%
Population not white Scottish/British (3)	6.3%	8.2%
Population qualified to SVQ4 and above (5)	45,000 39.3%	43.7%
Population qualified to SVQ2 and above(5)	84,500 73.8%	75.5%
Population with no qualifications (5)	10,400 9.1%	9.9%
Residents in work (5)	89,100 76.0%	73.9%
Unemployment level (ILO based estimate) (5)	3,600 3.9%	4.3%
Average hourly wage levels residents (FT) (7)	£12.62 per hour	£13.54 per hour
Average hourly wage levels workplaces (FT) (7)	£12.44 per hour	£13.50 per hour

3 Economy and Employment

The population of working age in West Lothian of 116,200 has continued to increase since 2011 and it is likely to increase by 5.9% up to 2029 (Scotland will increase by 4.4%). This does not take account of changes to the retirement age.

The employment level (the proportion of working age residents who are economically active and in-work) is slightly higher for West Lothian than for Scotland as a whole. This is in part due to the demographic factors and young people moving to university cities and towns.

Chart 1: Employment Rate



Source: ONS annual population survey

Latest estimates indicate that 89,100 or 76.0% of the working age population are in employment (compared to 73.9% for Scotland). Within this total there are 79,400 employees and 9,100 self-employed. As noted above the total number of residents in work (as estimated in the ONS annual population survey) had fallen between 2015 and early 2016 but subsequently increased to achieve peaks in both late 2016 and mid 2017 of 76.4%. The increase in employment is consistent with the reduction in the unemployment level.

West Lothian is not a self-contained economy or labour market. In 2011 (the 2011 census being the latest data), 61% of in-work residents were employed in West Lothian, 39% commute to mainly neighbouring areas – the largest proportion to the Edinburgh area. It is likely that commuting to and from West Lothian will increase over the next few years as new housing developments attract additional residents from Edinburgh.

Table 2: Pattern of commuting for West Lothian residents (2011 census)

Work at home or nearby	8,000	8%
Work in other parts of West Lothian	42,000	53%
Work in Edinburgh, Mid/East Lothian	20,000	25%
Work in other neighbouring local authority areas	5,400	9%
Work in Glasgow area	1,800	2%
Work elsewhere in Scotland/UK	2,000	2%

Source: Census 2011

3.1 Employment

Employment by occupation according to the Standard Occupational groupings shows the following pattern:

Table 3: Employment by Occupation – West Lothian Residents

Occupational Group 2016/17	West Lothian	Scotland
Group 1-3 (Managerial, professional and technical)	40%	43%
Group 4-5 (Administration, skilled trades)	18%	21%
Group 6-7 (Personal and customer services, sales)	22%	18%
Group 8-9 (Elementary and process operators).	20%	17%

Source: Annual Population Survey 2016

Whilst groups 1-3 make up the largest occupational group, in comparison to the national level West Lothian has a lower level of employees in groups 1-3 and 4-5 and higher relative representation in lower skilled occupations.

This pattern is also reflected in the overall picture in terms of skills and qualifications. West Lothian is slightly under the national average for basic and intermediate level

qualifications – e.g. 74% of adults are qualified to SVQ level 2 (compared with 76% for Scotland). West Lothian also lags behind Scotland for higher-level qualifications.

The gap has been narrowing in recent years as a result of demographic change and the outcome of interventions to promote attainment and progression into higher education.

3.2 Pay and in-work poverty

Employment by occupation according to the Standard Occupational groupings shows the following pattern:

Table 4a: Earnings by place of residence

	West Lothian	Scotland	% difference
Gross weekly pay full time workers	519.0	547.7	-5.5%
Gross weekly pay p/t workers	194.7	189.5	+2.7%
Hourly pay (f/t)	13.36	13.95	-4.4%
Hourly pay (p/t)	9.77	9.35	+4.3%

Source: Annual survey of Hours and Earnings 2017

Table 4b: Earnings by workplace

	West Lothian	Scotland	% difference
Gross weekly pay full time workers	538.1	547.3	-1.7%
Gross weekly pay p/t workers	202.4	189.3	+6.5%
Hourly pay (f/t)	13.61	13.98	-2.7%
Hourly pay (p/t)	9.76	9.40	+3.7%

Source: Annual survey of Hours and Earnings 2017

Gross wage levels for West Lothian (both residence and workplace) are generally below the Scottish levels. The exception to this is part-time employment where weekly pay for both residents and within the local job market are marginally higher. There remains a significant wage gap between males and females, as illustrated below. Although West Lothian wage levels are below the Scottish level, the pay gap is the same with females in full-time employment earning 86% that of males.

Table 4c: Gross weekly pay by place of residence – male and female

	West Lothian	Scotland
Male Full-time Workers	£554.70	£580.20
Female Full-time Workers	£479.10	£498.30
Female pay as % of male	86%	86%

Part time jobs in West Lothian (based on 2016 data) represent 31.6% of total jobs (compared with 28% in 2009 and 29% in 2012). The West Lothian level of part time jobs is also lower than the 33.5% recorded for Scotland and 32.3% for GB.

3.3 Other facets of low pay

- An estimated 19% of West Lothian working residents earn below the living wage level of £8.75 per hour compared to 22% for Scotland as a whole (data based on 2017-18 living wage and 2017 ASHE data).
- Similarly, approximately 20% of jobs located within West Lothian pay hourly rates below the living wage level compared to 22% for Scotland.
- Approximately 7,900 children are found in West Lothian working households that are in receipt of Working Tax Credit.
- This represents 17% of all working households (slightly higher than the Scottish level of 15%)

Table 5: Employment and wage levels – low paying sectors in West Lothian

	number	%	Median wage	Lowest 10%
I : Accommodation and food service activities	3,800	4.9	7.50	5.99
G : Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	15,400	19.9	9.25	7.20
A : Agriculture, forestry and fishing	200	0.3	9.37	7.20
R : Arts, entertainment and recreation	1,700	2.2	9.40	6.90
N : Administrative and support service activities	5,900	7.6	9.60	7.20
S : Other service activities	1,200	1.6	10.62	7.20

Precise local data is not available on self-employment and zero hours contracts. However, there is evidence that self-employment has increased in line with the general UK and Scottish trend, which would imply that more than 50% of recent self-employment growth has been part-time. At a UK level, zero hours contracts (i.e. contracts that do not guarantee

a specific number of hours) are estimated to apply to 2.8% of the labour force and to be particularly prevalent in health and care, education, accommodation and food. This might translate into approximately 2,500 West Lothian residents experiencing zero-hours contracts.

3.4 Unemployment

- The headline Claimant Count based unemployment is currently 1,835 or 1.6% (December 2017).
- The International Labour Organisation based unemployment estimate is 3,600 (3.9%) (average for the year Oct 2016-Sep 2017).
- The Youth unemployment level based on 18 to 24 year-olds claiming JSA and Universal Credit is 445 (3.0%) (December 2017). However, the JSA based measure does not provide a comprehensive picture – it excludes 16-17 year olds and individuals claiming other out-of-work benefits or no benefits at all.

With the reduction in the Claimant count, an increasing proportion of the remaining jobless population will be more likely to experience multiple barriers and be more difficult to reach. At the same time entry-level jobs now require higher developed core skills than might have been the case previously – including, for example, enhanced customer and communication skills and computing capacity. The process of job search and submitting applications to prospective employers is now mainly IT based.

Table 6: Working Age Benefits

Working-age client group - main benefit claimants (May 2017)

	West Lothian (numbers)	West Lothian (%)	Scotland (%)	Great Britain (%)
Job seekers plus Universal Credit	2,200	1.9	2.4	2.2
Employment and Support Allowance and incapacity benefits	9,100	7.7	7.6	5.9
Lone parents	1,210	1.0	0.9	0.9
Others	210	0.2	0.2	0.2
Key out-of-work benefits†	12,720	10.8	11.1	9.1

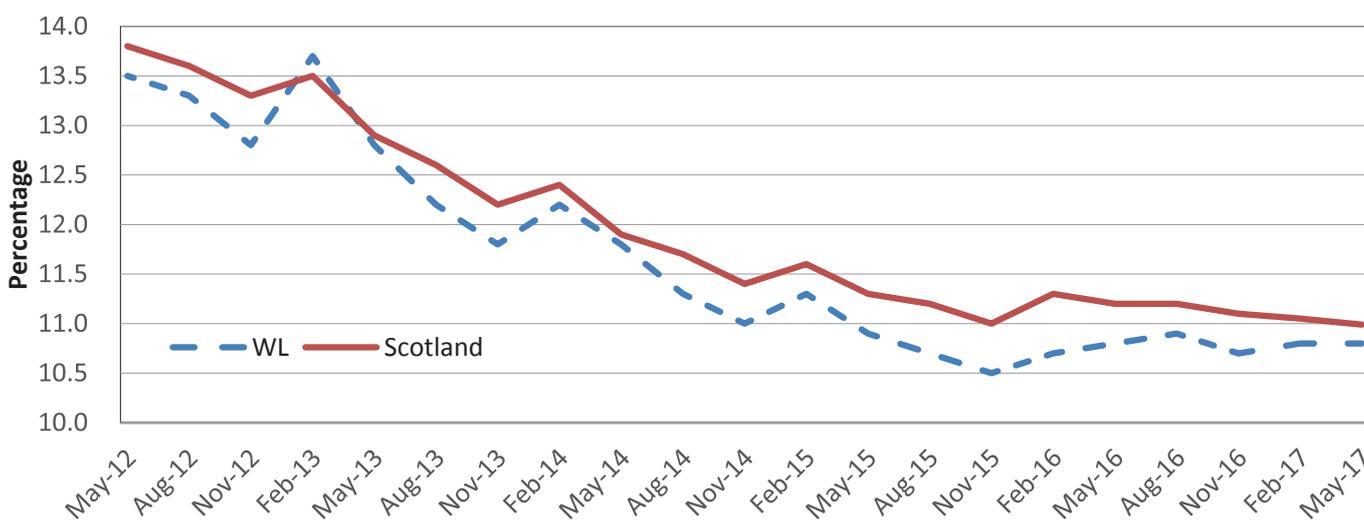
Source: DWP benefit claimants - working age client group

† Key out-of-work benefits includes the groups: job seekers, ESA and incapacity benefits, lone parents and others on income related benefits. Note: % is a proportion of resident population of area aged 16-64

DWP no longer provide updated summary statistics for working age clients, however, their final available figures (November 2016 – DWP) show that there are 15,610 benefit claimants of working age (16-64) in West Lothian, of whom

12,410 are in receipt of key out of work benefits. The estimates above have been developed from other individual benefit data to enable trends to be monitored going forward.

Chart 2: Main out of work benefit claimants



Source: DWP benefit claimants - working age client group

This reduction in key out of work benefit claimants has mainly been as a result of a fall in the number of claimants and this trend accelerated from 2013, but has bottomed-out since early 2016. The picture is mixed for other benefit data. The number of lone parents on Income Support has fallen by almost 530.

However, the number of ESA and Incapacity claimant, has remained static at around 9,130. The roll-out of full-service Universal Credit from summer 2018 will mean that tracking out of work benefit numbers will be a more complex exercise.

3.5 Household Income Estimates

Latest estimates for average gross disposable household income (after housing costs) suggests that median income per household in West Lothian in 2014 was approximately £634 per week (almost £33,000 per annum). These averages obviously mask considerable variations between areas and households.

An estimated 14% of West Lothian Households had income of 60% less than the Median (i.e. households with an income under 60% of the median value of £550 per week after adjusting for size of household).

Table 7: Median Household Income Estimates – 10 DZs with lowest

Datazone Names	Median Weekly income
Livingston Craigshill Streets East	£390
Bathgate Cochrane Street	£397
Bathgate Centre Station	£417
Armadale Mayfield	£417
Broxburn Greendykes Road	£419
West Calder Central & Mossend	£421
Fauldhouse Langrigg	£422
Blackburn Centre North	£423
Fauldhouse Centre	£429
Armadale McNeil Crescent	£431

(Source: Scottish Government, Small Area Income Estimates 2014)

4 Children and Families - Measuring Child Poverty at a Local Level

The Campaign to End Child Poverty has published an updated report on 24 January 2018 which analysed the relative level of child poverty.

The report provides an estimate of the number of children in poverty in each council ward, local authority and parliamentary constituency in the UK. These estimates are not accurate counts of how many children are in poverty in each area. Rather, they use local level data to give an indication of where child poverty is particularly high, and, therefore, where there need to be the strongest efforts to tackle it. <http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/poverty-in-your-area-2018/>

Estimates of local child poverty rates show that it is the highest in large cities, particularly in London, Birmingham and Manchester. The report does not include a specific estimate for Scotland. However based on aggregating the Scottish Local Authority data in the report, the Scottish rate once housing costs are deducted is approximately 23%.

West Lothian's level for 2017 is 14% before and 22% after housing costs – i.e. comparable to the Scottish level. Our

ranking in Scotland puts West Lothian in a joint 12th position alongside Edinburgh, Midlothian, Renfrewshire and South Lanarkshire. Glasgow (34% after housing costs) has the highest level of child poverty. Most of the ward areas with higher levels of child poverty can be found in the west of Scotland. The 2017 estimate appears to show a slight decrease for West Lothian from 23% After housing costs in 2015/16 (The figure for 2013/14 was 21%). However, given that these figures are modelled estimates it would therefore be wrong to conclude that the overall level of child poverty has decreased in West Lothian (i.e. the apparent change is within the margin of error for an estimate of this sort).

The picture within West Lothian appears to reflect the pattern for other measures of deprivation. Whitburn and Blackburn and Fauldhouse and Breich Valley Multi Member Wards have the highest rates. The Whitburn figure of just over 32% after housing costs places the ward in the 10% of wards across Scotland with the highest rates of child poverty.

Table 8: Percentage of children in poverty, 2017	Before Housing Costs	After Housing Costs
Whitburn and Blackburn	21%	32%
Fauldhouse and the Breich Valley	16%	26%
Livingston South	15%	24%
East Livingston and East Calder	14%	23%
Bathgate	14%	22%
Livingston North	12%	19%
Armadale and Blackridge	12%	19%
Broxburn, Uphall and Winchburgh	11%	18%
Linlithgow	6%	10%
West Lothian	14%	22%
Scotland		23%
Great Britain		28%

Source: Campaign to End Child Poverty

The Campaign to End Child Poverty published this updated report on 24 January 2018 which analysed the relative level of child poverty. Households are living in relative poverty if their household income is less than 60% of the average household income. This is one of the preferred measures of poverty

employed by the UK and Scottish Government, using national income survey data. This data is not available at a local authority level or for smaller geographic areas. So a modelling exercise has been undertaken using in-work and out-of-work benefits data to provide comparable local estimates.

Table 9: Percentage of children in relative poverty after housing costs

	Rate	Estimated Number	Ranking
Glasgow City	34%	37,554	1
North Ayrshire	29%	7,878	2
Dundee City	28%	7,632	3
West Dunbartonshire	26%	4,887	4=
East Ayrshire	26%	6,389	4=
Inverclyde	26%	3,920	4=
Clackmannanshire	25%	2,649	7=
North Lanarkshire	25%	17,922	7=
Dumfries and Galloway	24%	6,635	9=
Fife	24%	17,667	9=
South Ayrshire	24%	4,904	9=
Edinburgh, City of	22%	17,279	12=
Midlothian	22%	3,993	12=
Renfrewshire	22%	7,444	12=
South Lanarkshire	22%	13,859	12=
West Lothian	22%	8,551	12=
Falkirk	21%	6,694	17=
Argyll and Bute	20%	3,106	18=
Scottish Borders	20%	4,298	18=
Angus	19%	4,273	20=
East Lothian	19%	3,938	20=
Highland	19%	8,362	20=
Stirling	19%	3,148	20=
Moray	18%	3,219	24
Aberdeen City	17%	5,689	25=
Perth and Kinross	17%	4,628	25=
East Renfrewshire	16%	3,004	27=
Orkney Islands	16%	582	27=
East Dunbartonshire	15%	3,067	29=
Eileanan an Iar	15%	715	29=
Aberdeenshire	13%	6,365	31
Shetland Islands	9%	431	32

4.1 Free School Meals

With the introduction of free school meals for all pupils in P1 to P3, primary school data does not provide a particularly accurate picture of the incidence of disadvantage. However, free school meal data at secondary demonstrates a pattern of deprivation

that we see in other measures of poverty such as Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation and Benefit claimant statistics. Eg Inveralmond with the highest level of FSM registrations has a catchment which includes Craigshill and Ladywell.

Table 10: Free school meal entitlement 2017

Secondary School	Pupils registered for Free School Meals	% registered for Free school meals
Armadale Academy	113	15%
Bathgate Academy	131	17%
Broxburn Academy	132	16%
Deans Community High School	154	18%
Inveralmond Community High School	218	23%
Linlithgow Academy	84	6%
St Kentigern's Academy	210	16%
St Margaret's Academy	145	13%
The James Young High School	265	12%
West Calder High School	107	13%
Whitburn Academy	184	23%
West Lothian	1,743	15%

Source: Scottish Government, School Meals Survey 2017

4.2

Table 11: Foodbank vouchers distributed in West Lothian by Multi Member Ward

	No vouchers	Adults	Adults as % of adult popn.	Children	Children as % of child popn.	Total	Total as % of ward popn.
Armadale & Blackridge	196	233	1.7%	109	3.4%	342	2.0%
Bathgate	336	410	2.4%	176	4.1%	586	2.8%
Broxburn, Uphall & Winchburgh	255	323	2.0%	101	2.4%	424	2.1%
East Livingston & East Calder	198	276	1.8%	114	3.0%	390	2.1%
Fauldhouse & Breich Valley	185	231	1.8%	150	4.9%	381	2.4%
Linlithgow	81	92	0.7%	22	0.7%	114	0.7%
Livingston North	136	178	0.9%	125	2.4%	303	1.2%
Livingston South	209	267	1.4%	135	3.0%	402	1.7%
Whitburn & Blackburn	491	602	3.7%	217	6.1%	819	4.2%
West Lothian	2,087	2,612	1.8%	1,149	3.3%	3,761	2.1%

Source: West Lothian Council, 2016

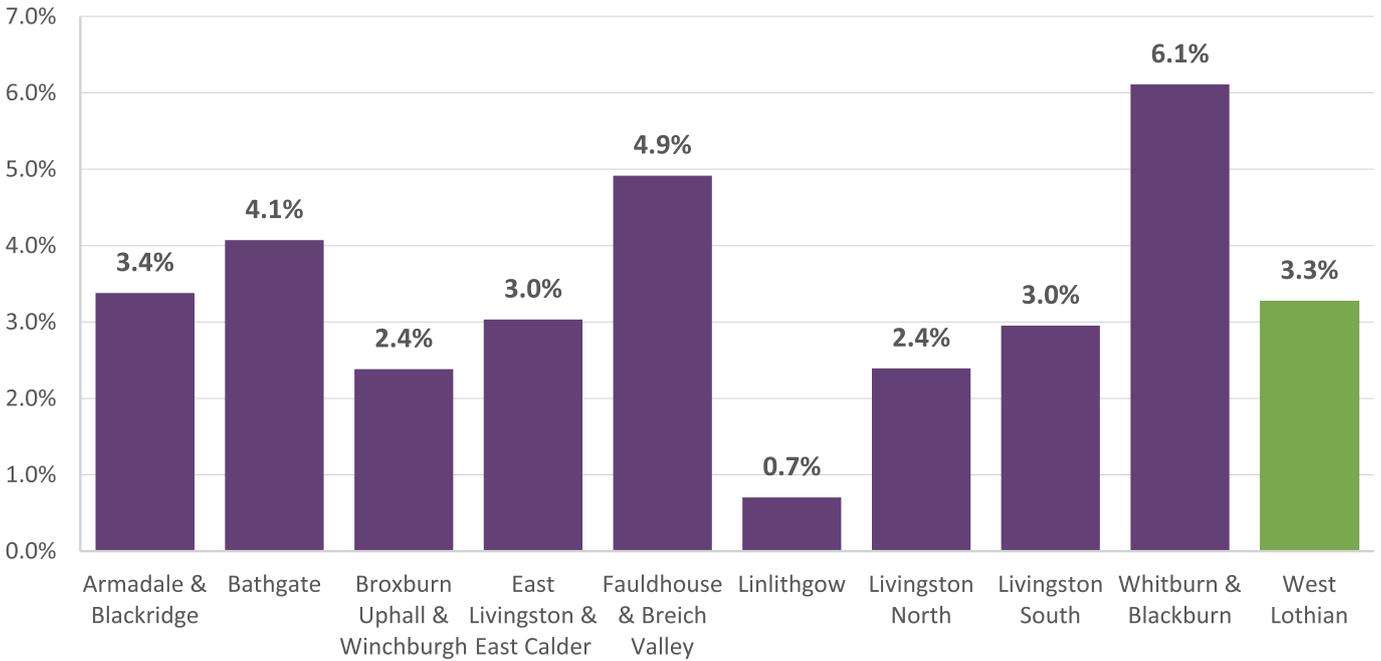
The number of foodbank vouchers distributed in West Lothian's wards in the financial year 2016/2017 totalled 2,087. Of these, almost one quarter (491) was distributed in Whitburn and Blackburn, followed by 336 in Bathgate and 255 in Broxburn, Uphall & Winchburgh.

3,761 residents (2,612 adults and 1,149 children) - about 2.1%

of the West Lothian population - were the beneficiaries of the food vouchers.

Within Whitburn and Blackburn, for example, 6.1% of the child population and 3.7% of the adult population received the help in the form of a food voucher.

Chart 3: Children in receipt of foodbank support as % of ward population under-16



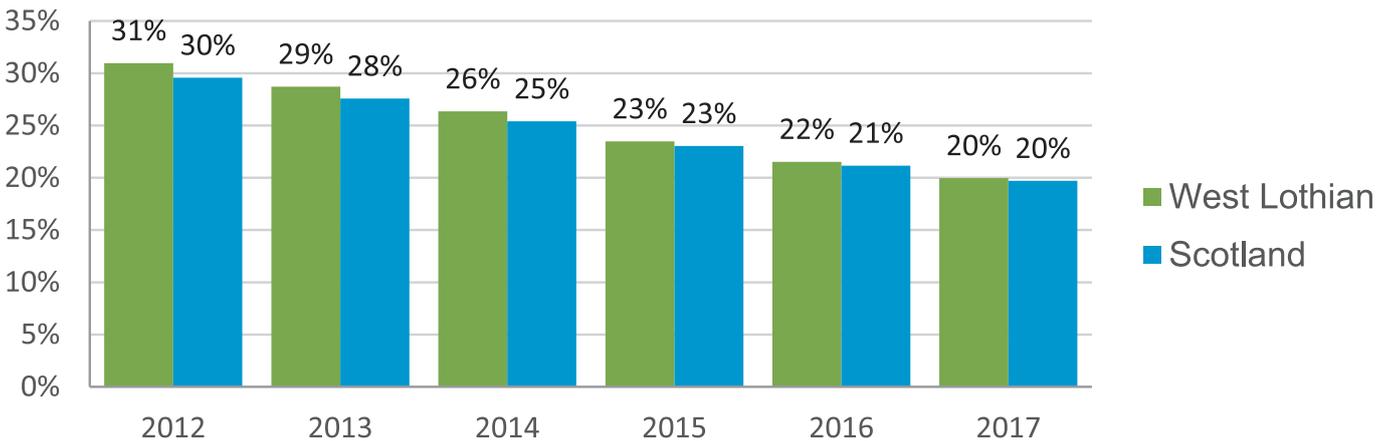
Source: West Lothian Council, 2016

5 Pensioners on Fixed/Low income

There are 29,390 people in West Lothian receiving the state pension. Of these, 5,870 (20%) receive Pension Credits to ensure a minimum income. This rate is equal to the Scottish level. The percentage has been falling both for West Lothian and Scotland since 2012. This might be due to a number of factors including:

- Lack of awareness of pension credit entitlement
- Equalisation of state pension age, which results in the Pension Credit qualifying age increasing
- Changes to the Savings Credit element of Pension Credit
- The introduction of new State Pension and general increases in the value of the basic state pension at a higher rate than benefits.

Chart 4: Percentage of pensioners in receipt of pension credit



Source: DWP benefit claimants data

6 Housing Tenure and Benefits

Figures from 2016 show that West Lothian has approximately 20,000 affordable social rented sector homes, of which there are 13,106 council houses.

The pattern of housing tenure in West Lothian is generally similar to that for Scotland for social rented with a lower level of private rented accommodation and higher level of owner occupation. Generally, private rented is highest in cities where

there is a large student resident population or market for young people. Nevertheless, in West Lothian the private rented sector has increased from 4% of households in 2008. The incidence of poverty amongst private rental residents has been noted at UK and Scottish level research. Increased rental levels mean that for working households on a modest net income of £20,000 might be paying 50% of that income towards housing costs.

Table 12a: Housing Tenure - households

	West Lothian	Scotland
Owner occupied	67.0%	61.0%
Social rented	21.0%	23.0%
Private rented	11.0%	15.0%

Source: Scottish House Conditions survey 2013-15

In considering the general pattern of poverty in West Lothian there appears to be a close relationship between housing tenure and economic status – social rented sector housing is much more likely to be occupied by people who are not in

employment – unemployed, post retirement and others who are economically inactive through caring commitment or ill-health.

Table 12b: Housing Tenure and Economic status – adult population

	% of adults In work	% of adults Unemployed	% adults Inactive
Owner occupied	69.8%	3.0%	27.2%
All social rented	41.4%	10.9%	47.7%
Private rented	64.5%	8.3%	27.2%

Source: Census 2011

Table 12c: Housing Benefit Recipients (as % of tenancies)

	Feb 2012		Feb 2017	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
All social rented	12,374	64%	11,598	61%
Private rented	3,047	33%	2,697	34%
Total	15,421	54%	14,295	53%

Source: DWP 2017

The majority of social rental tenants and over one-third of private rented tenants are in receipt of housing benefit. West Lothian has a higher proportion of households in receipt of

housing benefit than Scotland as a whole where 58% of social rented and 27% of private tenancies receive this benefit.

7 Area based deprivation

The latest version of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation was published in September 2016 and is based on both updated data and revised datazone boundaries, therefore providing a much more valid picture on the current spatial dimension to deprivation.

Income, Employment, Health and Education are the main drivers of deprivation in West Lothian. Crime is a factor insofar as the higher scoring datazones tend to have town centre locations where there is more reported crime.

In terms of headlines from the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation:

- West Lothian's relative position in terms of its share of areas in the most deprived 15% and 20% categories has not changed.
- West Lothian does not have the acute and extensive pattern of area deprivation that is evident in Glasgow and other parts of the west of Scotland.
- The number of datazones in the most deprived 15% located in West Lothian is 16. However a further 23 datazones are found within the 15 to 20% range.

The picture in West Lothian is one of clusters of deprived

datazones in some localities e.g. in Craigshill, Blackburn and Whitburn. However, elsewhere there is a more diffuse pattern with datazones in the most deprived 20% often sitting next to areas with low deprivation levels.

Changes to overall number and more logical boundaries of datazone alongside changes to the methodology for the domains means that comparisons should not generally be made with previous iterations of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. A number of areas including two datazones in Carmondean for example show up as being moderately deprived due to more logical datazone boundaries being introduced.

Nevertheless, the overall pattern of area deprivation in West Lothian is similar to that evidenced in previous SIMD exercises. The 2016 map is close to that derived from the deprivation mapping exercise 25 years ago. However, there also appears to be some positive change in that some areas where regeneration activity has been focused, most notably Boghall, no longer feature within the most deprived group of datazones.

The following link enables the Scottish Government interactive map to be accessed: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/SIMD/SIMDInteractive>

7.1 Regeneration area data

Regeneration areas in West Lothian have been selected through analysis of Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation and other sources of intelligence. Regeneration areas have been defined to include coherent local communities and therefore extend beyond the tight confines of the most deprived datazones as defined by SIMD. The table below provides a selection of indicators to describe the differences in poverty levels between the identified regeneration areas and in relation to West Lothian as a whole. When considered alongside other data, it is evident that Whitburn and Blackburn have particularly high levels of poverty and deprivation.

Regeneration Areas	Income Deprivation (1)		Employment Deprivation (1)		Relative Child Poverty Rate (2)	Median Household Income (3)		Social rented Housing (4)	Private Rented Housing (4)
	Number	%	Number	%	%	£ per week	WL =100		
Armadale	1,555	13%	875	12%	19%	651	102	29%	6%
Bathgate	2,570	12%	1,530	11%	22%	643	101	28%	12%
Blackburn	1,200	21%	640	18%	32%	500	79	42%	6%
Bridgend	180	19%	95	19%	NA	533	84	58%	4%
Craigshill	1,445	17%	780	17%	23%	489	77	48%	9%
Fauldhouse & Brieche Valley									
Fauldhouse	835	17%	495	16%	26%	507	80	36%	8%
Stoneyburn	275	14%	165	13%	26%	485	76	40%	7%
Addiewell	300	15%	150	10%	26%	605	95	47%	6%
Polbeth	455	16%	230	16%	26%	525	82	41%	5%
Livingston Central									
Dedridge	1,105	16%	625	14%	24%	591	93	32%	12%
Ladywell	1,030	21%	515	16%	19%	551	87	51%	7%
Knightsridge	740	19%	390	15%	19%	604	95	38%	8%
Whitburn	2,250	20%	1,105	17%	32%	502	79	38%	7%
Regeneration Areas Total	11,637	15%	6,340	15%	NA		NA	39%	8%
West Lothian	21,350	12%	11,885	10%	22%	634	100	26%	9%

Source: 1 SIMD 2016; 2 Campaign to End child Poverty; 3 SG Small area income Estimates; 4 SG Scottish House Conditions survey 2013-15

8 Comparisons with other parts of Scotland

As noted in relation to a number of indicators, West Lothian as a whole tends to have slightly lower levels of material poverty to Scotland, ie typically 1 to 3 percentage points below the Scottish rate. West Lothian has similar levels of poverty to a number of

other central Scotland local authority areas, which have been our traditional bench mark areas. Glasgow continues to be the local authority with the highest number and proportion of households and individuals experiencing poverty.

Table 14: Comparator data – benchmark areas

	Claimant Count 1	ILO Unemployment 2	Residents below living wage 3	Estimated children in poverty 4	Pensioner Credits 5
Clackmannanshire	3.6%	5.1%	28%	25%	15%
City of Edinburgh	1.3%	3.5%	17%	22%	13%
Falkirk	2.2%	4.6%	20%	21%	16%
Fife	2.4%	4.3%	22%	24%	13%
Midlothian	2.6%	3.7%	18%	22%	13%
North Lanarkshire	2.6%	4.7%	20%	25%	24%
South Lanarkshire	2.3%	3.8%	20%	22%	19%
West Lothian	1.6%	3.9%	20%	22%	17%
Scotland	2.3%	4.3%	22%	23%	17%
GB	1.9%	4.5%	23%	28%	16%

Sources: 1) ONS Claimant count Dec 2017; 2) Annual Population Survey; 3) ASHE 2016 & WLC Economic Development; 4) DWP Benefit Claimants Working Age Client Groups Nov 2016; 5) DWP Benefits Data 2017

9 Conclusions

The overall poverty picture outlined in this report suggests that overall West Lothian has slightly lower levels of poverty and deprivation than Scotland and Great Britain. Nevertheless a significant segment of the population experiences challenging financial and material circumstances. Approximately 20% of the population overall experiences some form of relative hardship with a smaller core of people and households in more extreme poverty. The picture varies across West Lothian and between demographic groups (being more extensive amongst young people and families with children than pensioners).

Whilst unemployment and economic inactivity as a result of ill health, disabilities or caring responsibilities is a key driver, the reduction in unemployment over the last five years has been

accompanied by an increase in the number of “working poor” and growth in insecure jobs and underemployment.

In terms of relative levels of poverty, the pattern across West Lothian evidenced through the SIMD provides a basis for informing the targeting of interventions. The Whitburn and Blackburn area has the highest apparent levels of poverty (and the Linlithgow area has significantly lower levels than the West Lothian average). There are however local pockets of deprivation across West Lothian where higher levels of income deprivation are present.

February 2018

Appendix B: links to other strategies and plans

- Local Outcomes Improvement Plan 2013 - 2023
- Regeneration Framework and Local Regeneration Plans
- West Lothian Local Housing Strategy 2017 - 2022
- West Lothian Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2017 - 2023
- Equality Outcome Plan 2017 - 2021
- Reducing re-offending Strategic Plan for West Lothian 2013-18
- West Lothian Economic Strategy and Action Plan
- NHS Lothian Strategic Plan 2014-24
- West Lothian Integration Joint Board Strategic Plan 2016 - 2026
- Fairer Scotland Action Plan
- Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015
- Getting it Right for Every Child
- Early Years Framework
- Community Justice (Scotland) Act 2016
- Learning and Skills Framework 2015-2018 (CLD Plan)
- Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017
- Corporate Parenting Report and Plan 2017-18
- Integrated Children's Services Plan 2012-2018
- West Lothian College Regional Plan and Outcome Agreement 2017-2020

Appendix C - People and groups we consulted with

Many thanks to the groups and organisations that took time to speak with us and give us their ideas and suggestions about how we can work together to tackle poverty in West Lothian:

- Ability Outreach Group
- Almond Housing Association Tenant Group
- Anti-Poverty Strategy Development Group
- Attendees at the Supporting Low Income Homes poverty awareness training programme
- Carers of West Lothian
- Citizens Advice Bureau clients group
- Experts by Experience Panel
- Home Start West Lothian
- Homeless Housing Network group
- MOOD Project
- Open Door
- Parents and carers at Balbardie Primary School
- Parents and carers at Bridgend Primary School
- Parents and carers at Toronto Primary School
- Parents and carers at Uphall Primary School
- Private Landlord Forum
- Race Forum
- Scottish Youth Parliament West Lothian members
- Senior People's Forum
- Transforming your council consultation respondents
- West Lothian Better Off consultation survey
- West Lothian Drug & Alcohol Service
- West Lothian Inter-Faith Group
- West Lothian Milan Group
- West Lothian Tenant Network

Appendix D: Information from consultation groups

As part of the consultation, partners were keen to ensure as many voices as possible were heard. It was agreed to use the Council's Facebook page to open the consultation up. Over 450 people responded. The responses helped confirm our overall understanding of how people are worrying and stressed regarding their finances. Participants were asked what best described their financial situation:

- Skint - very low or no income, cannot afford basic essentials such as food or clothing.
- Struggling - cannot afford to keep up with regular payments such as rent, council tax or gas/electricity. May need to borrow money or rely on family or friends to make ends meet.
- Surviving - just keeping afloat financially. Enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but unexpected costs or changes such as repairs, illness/injury or a relationship breakdown would be likely to cause real financial difficulty.
- Secure - able to afford all outgoings with enough to cushion for unexpected costs. May also be able to save regularly or afford extra costs such as holidays and leisure activities.

"Trying to juggle between essentials and allowing a budget to do things with your children"

"Trying to feed your children and pay bills is becoming harder and harder. Im now having to choose between paying bills or feeding and clothing my kids."

Skint (2.4%)

"Working with suppliers to offer Discounts to the most needy on food and house hold essentials."

"Cut council tax"

"Not having enough money to cover basic housing costs. I.e. Food, clothes, gas and electricity."

" The constant stress. The worry about meeting any unplanned extras. Feeling like failure for my daughter and her future."

Struggling (11.4%)

"Ensure people know where to access free non judgemental help with budgeting and finances."

"Supporting or creating opportunity for people willing to work but are not able because of child care."

"The constant pressure of having to borrow money to pay bills and the strain it puts on relationships and happiness"

" Depression, illness, kids suffer as they can't be like their friends, alienation. To have everything and then to have nothing is very hard."

Surviving (47.9%)

"Donation box at schools for used uniforms still in good condition"

"Basic budgeting skills in education so these issues are entrained from an early age"

"Although I don't have day to day worries with finance, I do worry about job security and what would happen if I was to be made redundant etc."

" Stress and anxiety"

Secure (38.2%)

"Free school meals for all primary students at least."

"Encourage employers to pay the living wage. Eliminate zero hours contracts"

Impact on Families

'There are a few crucial elements about living in poverty, I cannot name just one but there are 3 that I believe are the most difficult to manage:

- Knowing that you are not providing enough for your children such as clothing, birthdays and Christmas. This is not being overly dramatic about not having enough, there are times when it's been close to having nothing for them'
- Arguing with your spouse about finances places huge amounts of stress on the relationship which at times can make it difficult to parent effectively
- Feeling shame at having to be in a situation where you have to claim benefits and still not have enough for basic amenities, let alone provide something nice for the family from time to time.

Impact on Health and Wellbeing

'It impacts on every part of your life. The pressure causes the patience you have to go, then your ability to think straight and logically goes which impacts on your own mental wellbeing'

Impact on the Future

'Amount of choices diminish and it's more difficult to recover or get out of money problems. It spirals quickly'

Overall

- Most respondents live with a partner and the majority have children (2 on average)
- Most are employed either full or part time, the majority of part time workers are happy with the number of hours they currently work
- Income from employment is their main source of income and almost a quarter of respondents receive tax credits.
- 16% of respondents consider themselves to have a disability, with 47% of those reporting mental ill health and 30% reporting a longstanding health condition
- Most identify as 'surviving' or 'secure' but all respondents tell us they have experienced money worries either now or in the past

Surviving

- Typically live with a partner and have 2 children
- People who identify as 'surviving' are more likely to be underemployed (looking for more hours or better pay), carers or stay at home parents
- Main income still from employment but higher prevalence of tax credits
- 16% consider themselves to have a disability, mostly mental health conditions

Struggling

- Higher prevalence of single people
- More likely to have just 1 child
- Mixed backgrounds; more people reporting underemployment, unemployment, caring responsibilities and ill health affecting their work status
- Main source of income still employment but with most people in this group also receiving tax credits (55%)
- 28% report a disability

Skint

- More likely to be single, typically with children
- Higher prevalence of people unable to work due to ill health and higher prevalence of people unemployed and looking for work
- Main source of income for this group is out of work benefits
- 71% of respondents who identify as 'skint' consider themselves to have a disability, predominantly mental health related



Anti-Poverty Strategy 2018/19 to 2022/23



West Lothian
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