



## Ambitious

Inspiring and effective leaders on improving fairness over the next 15 years



## Poverty-free

Eradicating deep and persistent poverty for individuals and families



## Fair work

Championing work as a route out of poverty and to progression and advancement



## Affordable

Tackling the cost of living crisis to ensure everyone has sufficient resources for a decent and fulfilling life



## Connected

Driving the universal availability and access to the opportunities and benefits offered by digital technology



## Connected

Driving the universal availability and access to the opportunities and benefits offered by digital technology



## Empowered

Engaging and offering local control as the key to improving local public services and delivering better outcomes for citizens



## Skilled

Protecting and promoting the life chances of young people to escape a generational poverty cycle



## Healthier

Strengthening the understanding of what works in reducing health inequalities and scaling up and sustaining proven activities

# Fairer Fife 10 years on

Final Report  
October 2025

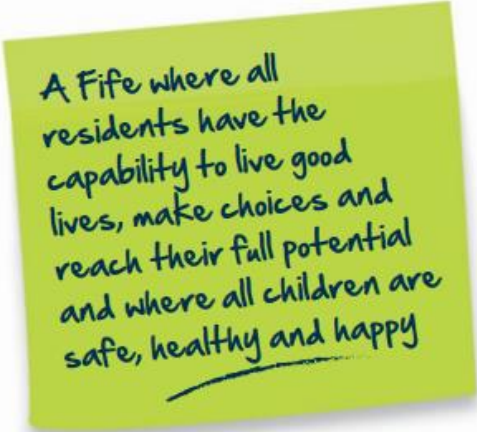
FAIRNESS MATTERS

# Introduction

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The Fairer Fife Commission was established by Fife Council in September 2014 to take a strategic overview of the scale, scope and nature of poverty in Fife and the effectiveness of activity currently undertaken to address such poverty. The Commission was tasked to report with recommendations to Fife Council and Fife Partnership by November 2015.

The Commission defined a Fairer Fife as:



A Fife where all residents have the capability to live good lives, make choices and reach their full potential and where all children are safe, healthy and happy

The Commission considered oral and written evidence on the themes of paid and unpaid work; place; being well; and life courses and transitions. The Commission also undertook community-based visits to gather personal testimony from people with direct experience of poverty, before setting out its recommendations in the *'Fairness Matters'* report.

## Recommendations

The Commission made 40 recommendations under 8 themes:

A Fairer Fife is:

1. Ambitious
2. Poverty-free
3. Fair work
4. Affordable
5. Connected
6. Empowered
7. Skilled
8. Healthier

Following consideration of the recommendations, a further three priority areas were added in relation to volunteering, fuel poverty and household food insecurity.

# A Fairer Fife?

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In reviewing the progress that has been made over the last ten years towards the ambition of a Fairer Fife, it is clear that Fife has acted on many of the recommendations or found alternative ways of taking action within each of the themes.

While many of the recommendations can be marked as achieved, how impactful that activity has been remains to be seen.

While Fife has seen improvement over time in almost all of the fairness measures achieving the top 5 target (relative to the 2015 baseline) for 8 of the 13 fairness measures, remains in the third quartile of all local authorities for the majority of indicators and still short of the ambition to be in the top 5 (as at 2025).

While considerable progress has been made, the goalposts for achieving the ambition of the Fairer Fife Commission have changed between 2015 and 2025, as Scotland as a whole has made in-roads in improving fairness.

## National context

Since 2014, a number of Scottish local authorities have established Fairness or Poverty Commissions to address inequality and poverty at the local level including: Fife (2015), Glasgow (2015), Dundee (2015-2016), Renfrewshire (2016), North Ayrshire (2016-2017), East Lothian (2017-2018), Edinburgh (2018-2020), and most recently, Highland (2025).

Nationally, the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 set out ambitious statutory targets to reduce child poverty by 2030, legally requiring Scottish local authorities and health boards to jointly produce Local Child Poverty Action Reports (LCPARs) each year as a key mechanism for tracking and promoting local action to reduce child poverty.

In 2019, the Scottish Government set up an independent Poverty and Inequality Commission to scrutinise what the government was doing and advise on what more can be done to tackle poverty and inequality.

The Scottish Government established the Fairer Scotland Duty, placing a legal responsibility on certain public bodies in Scotland to actively consider how they can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage, when making strategic decisions.

A key development has been the devolution of some social security benefits to Scotland, and the introduction of new benefits, including the Scottish Child Payment (2021) which has significantly reduced child poverty in Scotland relative to the other nations of the UK.

Other key developments over the last five years have included the rollout of 1,140 hours of free childcare for eligible children (2021) and the provision of free bus travel to under 22s (2022).

## Local context

Uncertainty highlighted in previous strategic and national assessments, continues to be a feature of the context for delivery of public services in Fife. National and international factors have impacted people at a very local level, not least through the COVID-19 pandemic which exposed existing vulnerabilities in local communities.

The 2021 Fife Strategic Assessment focused on the roadmap for recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. It predicted a long period of recovery and likely downturn in community outcomes during that period. Whilst that has proven to be true, progress has been made such as the Fife employment rate returning to pre-pandemic levels. However, efforts to

recover have been further hampered by a succession of additional and significant economic shocks, a consequential cost of living crisis and rising international instability including the war in Ukraine and the humanitarian and energy crisis that caused.

The impact of the cost of living crisis and associated increases in food and fuel costs has been widespread, every household has felt new pressure, but the impact on low income households has been greater. It has tipped many working households into crisis for the first time and exposed vulnerabilities in others that has increased demand and the need for urgent support from public services exponentially. Local people generally say that cost of living, funding for public services, poverty and inequality are the major issues living in Fife today.

Supporting households with the cost of living has been a major focus of work to tackle poverty and prevent crisis in Fife. See Fife's Cost of Living pages: <https://our.fife.scot/gethelp>

### Assessment

This report reviews and provides an assessment of progress against each of the 8 themes and 43 recommendations.

Each recommendation has been assessed as either:

Achieved	Green - the recommendation has been fully met or exceeded
Partially Achieved	Amber - some progress has been made, but the recommendation has not been fully met
Achieved in Principle	Yellow – the recommendation has been achieved in principle, but further investment and resource is required to maintain/improve the outcome
Not Achieved	Red - the recommendation has not been met at all
Not Assessed	Grey – evidence not available to make sufficient assessment

Where those actions were prioritised as part of the Plan for Fife 2017 to 2027, additional commentary has been provided.

We revisit the Fairer Fife Commission's 13 fairness measures - used to illustrate the scale of ambition needed to achieve a Fairer Fife - and explore how they have been changing over time.

In our analysis we consider how Fife compares with Scotland, its family group of Councils (according to the Local Government Benchmarking framework) and the fifth ranked local council (Top 5), both as it was in 2015 and what the Top 5 target is now in 2025.

# Ambitious

	<p><b>A Fairer Fife will be where the public, private and voluntary sectors are inspiring and effective leaders on improving fairness over the next 15 years.</b></p>	
<p>1. Fife Partnership should make a clear commitment to the fairness ambitions set out by the Commission.</p>		<p>Achieved</p>
<p>2. The Third Sector Strategy Group in Fife should develop an agreed strategic approach to the community and voluntary sector's role in tackling inequality and promoting fairness.</p>		<p>Achieved</p>
<p>3. Fife's business community and the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) are invited onto the Fife Partnership. Fife's business community (individually and collectively) should develop and invest in their role in tackling inequality and promoting fairness.</p>		<p>Achieved</p>
<p>4. Fife Partnership should commit to reporting in a regular, accessible, and timely fashion on progress towards a Fairer Fife.</p>		<p>Achieved</p>
<p>5. Fife Partnership should establish a Knowledge Hub to become a centre of excellence in translating data on fairness in Fife into practical action.</p>		<p>Achieved</p>

## Reporting on progress towards a Fairer Fife

Priority recommendations from the Fairer Fife Commission were incorporated into the Plan for Fife 2017-2027. Fife Partnership Board receives annual reports on the delivery of Plan for Fife priorities and ambitions. The Fairer Fife Review: 10 Years On is part of a supporting evidence base for the development of the next Plan for Fife.

## Community and third sector role

Members of the Third Sector Strategy Group worked with key stakeholders to discuss the sector's approach to inequality and fairness. This resulted in a conference in 2017 where approximately 130 stakeholders from across the sector came together. While there have been changes in representation over time, the Strategy Group has retained a focus on tackling poverty and continued to work alongside public sector colleagues. The group are currently planning an event for early 2026 to focus on poverty and disadvantage as well as celebrating and showcasing some of the good work and achievements that have been made.

## Knowledge Hub














Established in 2016 in response to the Fairer Fife Commission, the KnowFife Hub provides a forum for partners to share research, knowledge and learning. Strategic and Local assessments provide a shared understanding of the issues to be addressed through partnership working in Fife. All information is publicly available, including area research reports and community profiles which communities can use to inform local place plans. The Fife: Community Planning KHub group was relaunched in 2025 to support the informal sharing of information between community planning partners.

## Fairness ambitions

The Fairer Fife Commission identified a core set of fairness measures against which they set ambitious targets based on Fife aiming to be in the top five Scottish local authority areas. These were stretching across the whole range of services to help focus minds on the scale of action required.

Fife has seen improvement over time in almost all of the fairness measures achieving the top 5 target (relative to the 2015 baseline) for 8 of the 13 fairness measures.

Despite those improvements, Fife remains in the third quartile of all local authorities for the majority of indicators and still short of the ambition to be in the top 5 (as at 2025). While considerable progress has been made, the goalposts for achieving the ambition of the Fairer Fife Commission have changed as other areas have also made in-roads in improving fairness.

		Indicator	Fife 2015	Top 5 2015	Fife 2025	Top 5 2025	Top 5 2015 target met	Top 5 gap 2025
	1	Children in Poverty	18.1%	10.4%	18.0%	11.6%	No	6.4 pp
	2	Unemployment	4.5%	2.3%	3.2%	1.9%	No	1.3 pp
	3	Median Gross Weekly Pay	£516.20	£562.90	£730.70	£782.60	Yes	£51.90
	4	Fuel Poverty	31.0%	28.0%	24.0%	28.0%	Yes	4.0 pp
	5	Internet Users	82.0%	80.0%	91.0%	94.0%	Yes	3.0 pp
	6	Voting Turnout	37.9%	39.6%	44.7%	50.6%	Yes	5.9 pp
	7	Volunteering	24.0%	27.8%	26.0%	34.0%	No	8.0 pp
	8	School leavers going to Positive Destinations	92.5%	92.3%	95.6%	97.1%	Yes	1.5 pp
	9	Working Age with Qualifications	26.4%	33.2%	28.6%	38.1%	No	9.5 pp
	10	Pupils from deprived areas +5 awards at level 5	31.0%	38.0%	41.0%	53.0%	Yes	12.0 pp
	11	Pupils from deprived areas +5 awards at level 6	11.8%	14.8%	16.0%	24.0%	Yes	8.0 pp
	12	Premature Mortality	3.9	3.4	4.4	3.4	No	1.0 per 1,000
	13	Good mental health	15.0%	16.0%	20.0%	26.0%	Yes	6.0 pp

In our analysis we considered how Fife compares with Scotland, its family group of Councils (according to the Local Government Benchmarking framework) and the fifth ranked local council (Top 5), both as it was in 2015 and what the Top 5 target is now in 2025.

While Fife's performance is not significantly different to Scotland for 9 of the 13 measures it is significantly worse than Scotland in relation to child poverty, for working age adults with degree qualifications and above, and the attainment of pupils from deprived areas (at levels 5 and 6) (See Appendix 1 for spinechart and indicator definitions).

**Child poverty** was projected to rise over time, and rose steadily from 2015 until peaking in 2020 with the pandemic and subsequent cost of living crisis. The introduction of the Scottish Child Payment from 2021 has made a significant contribution to the reduction of child poverty in Fife, and Scotland, relative to the rest of the UK. Child poverty is unevenly distributed across Scottish local authorities, with Fife now having the ninth highest level of child poverty of all council areas. For Fife to reach the top 5, child poverty would need to reduce to 11.6%, compared to Fife's most recent 18%.

**Unemployment rates** began to increase for all areas from 2017, rising exponentially due to the pandemic with unemployment in Fife peaking at 6.6% in 2020. Since then, Fife has seen a substantial recovery period and has gone to a more sustainable 3.2% in 2025. Overall, Fife's unemployment rate has been higher than both its family group average and the national average. To reach the top 5 long-term unemployment in Fife would need to reduce to 1.9% (a 1.3 percentage point decrease).

**Median gross weekly pay** has risen steadily over the last 10 years. Initially, Fife's median wage lagged behind both the Family Group (FG) and the Scotland average. The Family Group median wage remained the highest among the three for most of the period, particularly before 2021. However, from around 2021 onwards, the gap between Fife, its Family Group, and Scotland narrowed significantly (only around £10 difference per week, £5 difference for family group). To reach the top 5 for median weekly wage, wages in Fife would need to be at least £782.60, an increase of around £50 per week.

Disruption to data collection with the pandemic and changes to methodology mean there is no recent **fuel poverty** data for all local authorities. Up to 2018, Fife had been making good progress in reducing fuel poverty. All households have since been affected by rising fuel costs which has compounded the cost of living crisis. For Fife to reach top 5, the fuel poverty rate would need to be 20%, a reduction of 4 percentage points

**Internet use** in Fife has continued to showed a positive upward trend. While Fife continues to outperform the Scotland average, it has been overtaken by a substantial increase in the FG average. In order for Fife to reach the top 5 local authorities for the percentage of adults identifying as internet users, the percentage of internet users would need to reach 94%, an increase of 3 percentage points.

In 2017, Fife recorded the highest percentage of **voter turnout** in council elections, reaching approximately 50.5%. This figure placed it ahead of both the Family Group (50.1%) and Scotland (46.9%) However, in 2022, Fife experienced a notable decline in turnout, dropping to 44.7% This brought Fife's turnout below both the national (44.8%) and Family Group (47.2%) values. For Fife to reach the top 5, requires at least 50.6% of the eligible population to turnout to vote, a 5.9 percentage point increase on Fife's most recent turnout.

Over the last ten years the percentage of adults **volunteering** in Fife was consistently below both the Scotland and Family Group average. In the most recent years (2022–2023), there has been a recovery in volunteer rates following earlier declines. In the latest release (2024), Fife has surpassed the national average with 26% of adults volunteering, compared to 25%

in Scotland. To reach the top 5, volunteering would need to be at least 34%, an 8 percentage point increase.

Over the last ten years, Fife has been consistently tracking below both its Family Group and Scotland in terms of school leavers going on to **positive destinations** (education, employment or training). Fife has closed the gap on Scotland in 2023/24 with 95.6% of leavers going to positive destinations compared to 95.7% for Scotland. For Fife to reach the top 5, the percentage of school leavers going to positive destinations would need to be 97.1%, a 1.5 percentage point increase from Fife's current value.

In both the 2011 and 2022 census, Fife recorded lower levels of **working age people with degree level qualifications or above** compared to both the national and family group averages. In 2011, 23.8% of people living in Fife had qualifications at the degree level or more, compared to Scotland's 26.1% and Fife's family group average at 25.0%. In 2022 Fife saw an increase of 4.8 percentage points in proportion of working age having higher level qualifications (28.6%), but this remains below both its family group (30.5%) and Scotland (32.5%). For Fife to reach the top 5, 38.1% of people would need degree level or higher qualifications (a 9.5 percentage point increase in Fife).

Over the last 10 years the percentage of **pupils from deprived areas in Fife gaining 5 or more awards at Level 5** has shown a generally upward trend but remains significantly below the Scotland and Family Group averages. For Fife to rank among the top 5, the percentage of pupils from deprived areas achieving +5 at level 5 would need to increase from 41% to 53%.


Fife has shown a steady increase in the percentage of **pupils from deprived areas achieving 5+ awards at Level 6** (similar to the trend at level 5) rising from 12.6% to 16% over the decade. Despite this improvement, Fife significantly lags behind both the Scottish average and the Family Group average. For Fife to rank among the top 5, the percentage of pupils from deprived areas achieving +5 at level 6 would need to increase from 16% to 24%.

Overall, Fife has maintained a comparatively favourable position in terms of **premature mortality** (under 75 years, per 1,000 population), with a more stable and lower rate than both Scotland and Fife's Family Group. For Fife to reach the top 5, premature mortality from all causes (aged 75 and under) would need to be as low as 3.4 per 1,000 of the population.

Fife showed a generally improving trend in **good mental health** (measured by percentage of people with a GHQ-12 score of 4 or more) ahead of national and family group averages which also improved over time. Post-pandemic this gap narrowed but latest data (2021-2024) shows a widening of gap between Fife (20%) and Scotland (23%). For Fife to reach the top 5, a score of at least 26% would be needed, an increase of 6 percentage points.

Overall, while Fife has seen improvements across the range of fairness measures, and has achieved the Top 5 target (as at 2015) for 8 of the 13 measures, it remains in the third quartile of all local authorities for the majority of these measures, and there remains a sizeable gap to achieve the Top 5 target (as at 2025).

# Poverty-free

	<p>A Fairer Fife will be where the public, private and voluntary sectors are eradicating deep and persistent poverty for individuals and families.</p>	
<p>6. Fife Partnership should strengthen the partnership with Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to rapidly improve function of welfare system in Fife, critically to include greater trust between job seekers and job centres.</p>	<p>Achieved</p>	
<p>7. Fife Partnership should rebalance its employability programmes to primarily focus on those with physical or mental health challenges (with lead responsibility resting with NHS Fife/the Health and Social Care Partnership) and those requiring basic adult-learning support (with lead responsibility resting with Fife Council).</p>	<p>Achieved</p>	
<p>8. Fife Partnership should rapidly develop social approaches and parent-led childcare in communities, with highest concentrations of low-income families based on need rather than ability to pay market rates, and designed to support parents attend learning and training and jobs.</p>	<p>Partially Achieved</p>	
<p>9. Fife Partnership should consider further development of a localised approach to employability including devolution of the delivery of the Work Programme to Fife.</p>	<p>Achieved</p>	
<p>10. Fife Partnership should select a town in Fife to test and evaluate a highly innovative 'Basic Income' pilot, learning from leading practice around the world.</p>	<p>Achieved in Principle</p>	

## Employability

Programmes commissioned through the Opportunities Fife Partnership 'No One Left Behind' framework focus on addressing employment barriers, including physical or mental challenges. The Supported Employment model is utilised within Fife Council's Employability Service.


## Childcare

Since August 2021, all local authorities have been offering 1,140 hours of funded ELC to all eligible children. The programme also provides support for 2 year olds from families in receipt of benefits and those with experience of care. In addition, Fife Council's Childcare Services Team is contributing to a Scottish Government funded Early Adopter Community (EAC) project which is now in year 2 – the delivery phase - and targets vulnerable families, including those affected by poverty.

## Citizens basic income

In 2017, Fife began groundwork to scope out what a basic income might look in Scotland. In 2018, Fife and North Ayrshire produced an international learning report for Carnegie UK following a visit to the Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN) conference in Tampere, Finland. Through a consortium approach (Fife, Glasgow, Edinburgh and North Ayrshire Councils, in partnership with NHS Health Scotland, Scottish Government and the Improvement service) undertook a Basic Income feasibility study for Scotland (funded by the Scottish Government as part of their programme for government). The report concluded that a Citizens Basic Income (CBI) pilot is desirable, but recognised the significant challenges involved. The work is now informing national work on a Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG).

## Fair work

	<p>A Fairer Fife will be where the public, private and voluntary sectors are championing work as a route out of poverty and to progression and advancement.</p>	
<p>11. Fife Partnership should set the ambition of becoming a living wage region.</p>	<p>Partially Achieved</p>	
<p>12. Fife Partnership should commit to exploring a fairness in self-employment hub in Fife, with Business Gateway and the Fife Economic Partnership to help self-employed workers structure their work and enterprise arrangements to maximise their earnings and work security.</p>	<p>Achieved</p>	
<p>13. Fife Partnership should invest in and promote enhanced social enterprise development capacity for Fife to work in tandem with existing agencies such as Business Gateway.</p>	<p>Partially Achieved</p>	
<p>14. Fife Partnership should refocus the geography of economic development activity from a 'Fife-outwards' perspective, to one that focuses on the assets within Fife, for example through a Fife 'Towns Deal' supporting towns to attract 'good jobs' to Fife.</p>	<p>Partially Achieved</p>	

### Community Wealth Building

Fife has adopted the community wealth building approach to economic development. This seeks to retain more wealth in local communities and give communities greater control, ownership and decision-making over local assets. It focuses on local enterprises and assets, the public sector spending with local businesses and supply chains and employing local people and obtaining greater socio-economic environmental benefits from investment in Fife. It involves paying the Real Living Wage, ensuring Fair Work, and developing more democratic and inclusive business models, like social enterprises and cooperatives.


### Living wage

Glenrothes was successfully established as a Living Wage Town by 2020, led by the Economic Development team. An Action Plan was developed to encourage local businesses to adopt the Real Living Wage, supported by various engagement activities including a campaign across Kingdom FM and outreach throughout the town. A dedicated officer was appointed to lead the initiative. Following the project's completion, discussions took place about potential next steps. While there was interest from Kirkcaldy, the absence of a dedicated resource has limited progress. Dunfermline has also been considered, particularly in light of its new city status, with Cardiff cited as a best practice example. Procurement practices have been used to promote Living Wage adoption among suppliers and contractors, with 94% reported as committed in the 2024/25 annual report. The next phase involves identifying resources to support further work and selecting a pilot area - either a specific locality or a Fife-wide approach.

## Social Enterprise

Business Gateway Fife provides advice and support for businesses, which includes support for social enterprises. Support is also offered in the third sector, primarily from Fife Voluntary Action. Yet a lack of a dedicated resource has meant this area is underdeveloped. The Social Enterprise in Scotland Census 2024 shows there are an estimated 260 social enterprises in Fife. This is only a small increase since the previous census for 2021, which found 258 social enterprises in Fife. Fife has a large and varied third sector, but there is a recognised need for a dedicated support package for social enterprises to support community organisations to become more enterprising and sustainable. Work is underway to explore what support is needed for new and existing social enterprises in Fife. This could involve expert advice and support for social enterprise development and support for community organisations and community enterprises with asset transfer, for example, through training, funding, or advisory services, to enable meaningful participation in plural ownership of the economy.

# Affordable

	<b>A Fairer Fife will be where the public, private and voluntary sectors are tackling the cost-of-living crisis to ensure everyone has sufficient resources for a decent and fulfilling life.</b>	
15.	Fife Partnership should pilot a 'Living Rent' programme in partnership with the Scottish Government, where average rent-setting is linked more closely to local median wages.	Achieved
16.	Fife Partnership should host accessible, inclusive cross-party summits on availability of land in each of Fife's five Scottish Parliament constituency areas to identify barriers to meeting its affordable housing targets and identifying innovative solutions to improve housing supply.	Partially Achieved
17.	Fife Partnership should design advice and support services for those living on low incomes for maximum usage by being based in places and services that people already use.	Achieved
18.	Fife Partnership should continue to develop a business case and plans for a social enterprise lending organisation (Community Developed Finance Initiative) to offer borrowing and money advice to low income, high-risk groups who would otherwise use higher cost alternatives.	Achieved
19.	Fife Partnership should implement a harm-reduction policy for benefits sanctions, ensuring people have the information and support needed to avoid sanctions, challenge sanction decisions and apply for DWP Hardship Payments if they are sanctioned.	Achieved
20.	Fife Partnership should introduce income maximisation checks at key points through statutory service provision – health facilities and services, and education services.	Achieved
21.	Employers in Fife should take a lead in considering how they can support credit union membership on behalf of their employees, either through establishing work-based initiatives or making links to existing credit unions.	Achieved
22.	Fife Partnership should carry out a cost-benefit analysis for the introduction of free travel cards – targeted at low-income families – with particular consideration for cards for those seeking work and recently moving into work (extension of scheme to support people attending food banks).	Achieved
42.	To set an ambition to eliminate fuel poverty in Fife through the provision of energy efficient homes and options for affordable warmth.	Achieved in Principle
43.	Fife Partnership will ensure there are effective, dignified mechanisms for supporting people facing food crisis while working towards a significant reduction in household food insecurity. It will support innovative approaches to ensuring that all Fife citizens have access to affordable, healthy food, and the skills and knowledge to prepare nutritious meals for themselves and their families. These approaches should recognise the social value of food: that food is an opportunity to bring people together and not just about consumption.	Achieved

## Living rent

The Fife Living Rent Model has now been formally adopted and continues to play a central role in the rent setting consultation process. This model provides a structured and transparent framework for determining fair and sustainable rent levels across Fife.

## **Advice and support services**

The Fife Advice Framework has been developed and launched providing a coordinated approach to delivering advice services across the region. It aims to improve access, consistency, and quality of advice for residents by aligning partners and resources under a shared structure. CARF provides higher-level welfare rights advice, helping to improve access to support within communities and ensuring more people receive the help they need with navigating the benefits system.

## **Community Development Finance Initiative**

Fife, in collaboration with West Lothian and Falkirk led the establishment of a social enterprise lending organisation (Community Developed Finance Initiative) to offer borrowing and money advice to low income, high-risk groups who would otherwise use higher cost alternatives. It operated for a couple of years before withdrawing its physical presence, though services continued online. Following this, Kingdom Community Bank began to take on some of the functions previously provided by the CDFI, helping to maintain financial support services within Fife.


## **Fuel poverty**

Work is ongoing to improve insulation and energy efficiency across council properties, supporting efforts to tackle fuel poverty. A dedicated fuel poverty response programme has been established, focusing on crisis support for individuals and families struggling to afford adequate heating. This includes implementing practical measures to help heat homes and delivering a range of initiatives aimed at supporting both council tenants and the wider population of Fife.

## **Dignity in food provision**

Fife is one of eight local authorities working with the Scottish Government to end the need for foodbanks, supported by Cash First funding. A Dignity Charter is being developed to promote awareness of dignified and cash-first approaches among community food providers. This work is informed by learning from the “People Coming First” project in Kirkcaldy and focuses on putting people at the centre of support. In 2024/25, Fife saw a reduction of 1,700 food parcels issued, reflecting the positive impact of more dignified approaches. The programme also includes expanding access to community meals, cooking education, and food provision alongside other local activities.

# Connected

	<p>A Fairer Fife will be where the public, private and voluntary sectors are driving the universal availability and access to the opportunities and benefits offered by digital technology.</p>	
23.	Fife Partnership should establish a network of Digital Business Hubs across Fife to support employees of non-Fife based organisations to work and locate locally.	Achieved
24.	Fife Partnership should develop plans in collaboration with Housing Associations for non-commercial tariff for digital broadband to be made available to all social housing tenants.	Partially Achieved
25.	Fife Partnership should extend the availability of free, public Wi-Fi across community and public buildings throughout Fife.	Partially Achieved
26.	Fife Partnership should continue the deployment of superfast broadband technology to ensure availability for all households and businesses across Fife.	Achieved in Principle
27.	Fife Partnership should invest in digital champion and volunteer approaches, building on successful models already developed in Fife, to support many more people to help their friends and family develop basic digital skills.	Achieved

## Social tariffs – broadband

Withdrawal of the chosen provider prompted a shift in approach, with the roll out of MiFi devices through Connecting Scotland as an alternative solution. In sheltered housing, council Wi-Fi has been successfully introduced in communal lounges, and options are being explored to extend this to individual flats. New build council homes now include ducting for broadband, ensuring they're ready for future connectivity.

## Free public Wi-Fi

Work is progressing to extend council Wi-Fi access to tenants across various council housing locations. The initial rollout has focused on care villages, with plans to expand further through the 'WiFife' initiative. This approach aims to improve digital inclusion by making internet access more widely available in council homes. While the infrastructure is being put in place, tenant uptake is still being monitored and is currently unknown.


## Superfast Broadband

Fife has supported the deployment of new technology to deliver faster broadband to homes and businesses across Fife. This is part of the Scottish Government's programme to improve the nation's digital infrastructure and support connectivity.

## Digital champions

Through the Connecting Scotland scheme, a network of digital champions was developed within services working with older people in sheltered housing. This work was strengthened through a partnership with YMCA Fife, which led to the appointment of a dedicated digital inclusion worker. The role, in place for over a year now, focuses on training both staff and tenants to improve digital skills and confidence. The initiative was driven by post-Covid research into tenants' attitudes towards digital technology, which found that around two-thirds were willing to engage with and use digital services. The aim is to train as many staff as possible to support ongoing digital inclusion efforts.

# Empowered

	<p>A Fairer Fife will be where the public, private and voluntary sectors are engaging and offering local control as the key to improving local public services and delivering better outcomes for citizens.</p>	
<p>28. Fife Partnership should rapidly implement poverty-training and workforce development for Fife Council staff and those in partner organisations.</p>	<p>Achieved</p>	
<p>29. Fife Partnership should invest in a strong local pilot for devolution by identifying a local area to receive significant public expenditure to be devolved to locality level and use participatory budgeting to guide spending.</p>	<p>Achieved</p>	
<p>41. To promote the benefits-to-all of volunteering, the opportunities for doing so and to significantly increase the number of people who volunteer in Fife.</p>	<p>Achieved</p>	

## Poverty awareness training

An enhanced programme has been delivered to build staff capacity in providing benefits and energy advice, with over £700,000 invested to support this work. A dedicated post was created to lead the initiative, which has been developed in collaboration with third sector partners to maximise reach and impact.


## Participatory Budgeting

Since 2021, Fife has exceeded the COSLA/Scottish Government target of 1% of a local authority’s budget to be set through participatory means each year. This has been achieved mainly through mainstream PB on the redesign of passenger transport services, and service user involvement in commissioning of employability services (No One Left Behind). Through the Capital programme, there has been involvement of local people in development of new community facilities in Templehall and Abbeyview. Small Grants PB processes restarted at scale from 2024, with Community Recovery Funding, across Cowdenbeath (£96k, across 8 towns and villages), Kirkcaldy (£304k), Glenrothes (£130k), and City of Dunfermline (£30k) Areas.

## Volunteering

The Fife Voluntary Action Volunteering Strategy, approved by the Fife Partnership Board in August 2021, continues to address the decline in informal volunteering following the pandemic. A Council-supported campaign throughout 2024/25 has contributed to a noticeable increase in volunteer engagement. Preparations are underway for the launch of Fife50 in 2025 - a new collaboration involving 50 volunteer-involving organisations. This initiative will enhance data sharing, monitor volunteering trends, and inform future campaigns. Although financial contributions from private sector partners have reduced, several now offer staff volunteering time (typically 1–2 days annually), particularly for employment support activities. Within the Council, volunteer support has been strengthened, especially in Community Learning & Development and Active Schools. The Communities & Neighbourhoods Directorate has achieved Investing in Volunteering accreditation, reflecting its commitment to volunteer development. Volunteering continues to be promoted internally, with managers encouraged to support staff participation through flexible working arrangements and access to Council resources.

# Skilled

	<p>A Fairer Fife will be where the public, private and voluntary sectors are protecting and promoting the life chances of young people to escape a generational poverty cycle.</p>
<p>30. Fife Partnership should require all schools in Fife to develop and deliver a plan for significantly reducing the educational attainment gap in their school based on what is proven to work and with dedicated financial and in-kind support.</p>	<p>Achieved</p>
<p>31. Fife Partnership should be inspired by the Glasgow Cost of the School Day project and invest in a local programme to reduce financial barriers affecting participation and experiences at school for children from low income households.</p>	<p>Achieved</p>
<p>32. Fife Partnership should commit to establish an apprenticeship for every £1 million of public expenditure. This should be augmented by the development of an apprenticeship scheme for public bodies to sponsor apprenticeships in SMEs.</p>	<p>Partially Achieved</p>
<p>33. Fife Partnership should work with the business community to provide more support for skills development, focussing on those at particular risk of labour market marginalisation – including women, lone parents, people with disabilities and some ethnic minority groups.</p>	<p>Achieved</p>
<p>34. Fife Partnership should consider further methods to refresh links with the University of St Andrews, particularly on big data, innovation in digital civic engagement and the use of science.</p>	<p>Achieved</p>

## Cost of the school day


Fife Council Education Directorate seeks to use the Attainment Scotland Fund strategically, in order to address the challenge of Closing the Poverty Related Attainment Gap and to support families by reducing the Cost of the School Day. Schools support families with the cost of the school day in a variety of ways, including: provision of breakfast clubs; support with or provision of free uniforms, toiletries, etc; cost of school trips and events. Some schools also act as referring centres for local foodbanks and services like the Big Hoose (providing small and large household items). Schools also provide information to support parents and carers access Benefits Checkers and to apply for benefits, to help maximise household incomes. Actions to address the Cost of the School Day are an integral part of annual School Improvement Plans and details about each schools approach can be found on the school web-site.

## Public Expenditure

Public sector contracts can require suppliers to deliver social value / community benefits, which provided added value to the contract. In large investment projects, Fife Council works with contractors to deliver social value, including apprenticeships and work placements for young people. In addition, contractors and the supply chain have delivered essential skills for employment, providing training on how to apply for jobs in the construction sector and tips for interviews.

Life Chances, Fife Council's progressive recruitment approach, is providing paid work placements in Fife Council, NHS Fife and the third sector for individuals who are long-term unemployed and/or have multiple barriers to the labour market. Once the placement is complete, clients are offered a guaranteed job, providing sustainable employment and career pathways. While this programme is offered to unemployed people of any age, it does offer a progressive pathway into employment for young people who may require support to gain employment.

# Healthier

	A Fairer Fife will be where the public, private and voluntary sectors are strengthening the understanding of what works in reducing health inequalities and scaling up and sustaining proven activities.	
35.	Fife Partnership should continue to support the joined-up approach provided by the Fife Health and Wellbeing Alliance, strengthening the understanding of what works in reducing health inequalities and scaling up and sustaining proven activities. The knowledge hub should provide a forum for the sharing of learning and good practice, and the use of health inequalities impact assessment.	Achieved in Principle
36.	Fife Partnership should invest further in the local voluntary health sector to support their work on reducing health inequalities and in co-producing community-based services.	Achieved in Principle
37.	Fife Partnership should consider establishing a pilot project on reducing stress and supporting resilience for those of working age who are living alone.	Partially Achieved
38.	Fife Partnership should develop a clear focus on health and employment, to increase employability capacity and sustain employment for people with health problems.	Achieved
39.	Fife NHS Board should contribute to a reduction in inequalities over and above the obvious provision of public health services and integration agenda (e.g. as an employer, a procurer of goods and services and strong partner).	Achieved
40.	Fife Partnership should maximise the potential impact of its collective (and skilled) workforce to carry out simple interventions (e.g. income maximisation) when interacting with citizens and not only focus on the issue at hand but seek to understand household circumstances.	Achieved

## Health and employment

In line with No-one Left Behind (NOLB), person centred provision is supported by Opportunities Fife Partnership funding, including Positive Pathways, a programme run by the Supported Employment Service to support individuals whose barriers to employment include physical and mental health challenges. The upcoming commissioning process will ensure a focus remains on supporting physical and mental health challenges.

## Anchor Institution Work

Anchor institutions can make a huge, positive impact in their local area. They are large, locally rooted organisations like NHS Health Boards, Colleges, Universities, Police, and Local Authorities. These organisations have a major presence and impact in a local area. They employ many people, spend large amounts of money, own and manage land and assets, and deliver crucial public services. By deliberately adopting strategies that support their local community, they have the potential to further support the economy and reduce inequalities caused by socioeconomic disadvantage. Anchor institutions are a key mechanism to deliver Community Wealth Building. They have a huge opportunity to redirect wealth back into their local economies, so that workers, residents and consumers can benefit more from the economic activity happening in their communities.

# Conclusions

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In 2015, the Fairer Fife Commission set out a wide-ranging set of recommendations for tackling poverty in Fife across eight themes. Fife Partnership reviewed and prioritised these recommendations and agreed an action plan.

Priority actions from the Fairer Fife action plan were incorporated into Fife's Local Outcome Improvement Plan: the Plan for Fife 2017 to 2027. The recovery and renewal Plan for Fife 2021 to 2024 identified Tackling Poverty and Preventing Crisis as one of the three delivery priorities for Fife Partnership, underpinned by a community wealth building approach.

Looking back, it is clear that Fife has progressed a range of activity in relation to each of these recommendations. Many of the recommendations have been achieved, and some of this has been through highly innovative partnership activity.

Fife has seen improvement over time in almost all of the fairness measures, achieving the top 5 target (relative to the 2015 baseline) for 8 of the 13 fairness measures.

Despite those improvements, Fife remains short of the ambition to be in the top 5 (as at 2025). While considerable progress has been made, the goalposts for achieving the ambition of the Fairer Fife Commission have changed as other areas have also made inroads in improving fairness.

Since the 2015 Fairer Fife Commission there has been an increased focus on local action on child poverty - across all areas of Scotland - enabled by legislation, but also accelerated by increased demand for support from low income households through the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost of living crisis.

While Fife has delivered on actions across the Fairer Fife themes and recommendations the outcomes remain short of the ambitions of the commission. Fife continues to face persistent challenges in relation to:

- lifting children out of poverty,
- improving the attainment of pupils from most deprived areas, and
- improving the qualifications of the working age population.

These should be priority areas of action for Fife Partnership going forward.

# About this report

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Policy and Communications supports strategy and delivery for the Council and community planning partners in Fife.

This includes delivering engaging high-quality general insight for those involved in delivering public services across Fife.

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## Important Notes on this Report














1. The Fairer Fife Commission was established by Fife Council in September 2014 to take a strategic overview of the scale, scope and nature of poverty in Fife and the effectiveness of activity currently undertaken to address such poverty.
2. In late 2015, the Commission reported on its findings, making 40 recommendations across 8 themes.
3. Fife Partnership committed to reviewing progress against the Fairer Fife Commission recommendations every five years.
4. This report reviews the progress that has been made in the 10 years since the Commission concluded.
5. This report will inform leadership discussions about the development of a new plan for Fife from 2027.

## Appendix 1 – Fairer Fife Indicators – Spinechart



	Indicator	Fife Number	Fife Value	Scotland Average	Scotland Worst	Scotland Range	Top 5	Scotland Best
	1 Children in Poverty	11038	18.0	16.3	28.9		11.6	8.0
	2 Unemployment	7420	3.2	3.0	4.7		1.90	1.3
	3 Median Gross Weekly Pay	£730.70	730.70	£740.00	£638.60		782.6	862.0
	4 Fuel Poverty	24%	24.0	24.0	40.0		20	13.0
	5 Internet Users	91%	91.0	91.0	85.0		94	96.0
	6 Voting Turnout	289315	44.7	44.8	38.4		50.6	53.4
	7 Volunteering	26	26.0	25.0	15.0		39.0	34.0
	8 Leavers going to Positive Destinations	96%	95.6	95.6	92.2		97.1	98.7
	9 Working Age with Qualifications	88755	28.6	32.5	21.7		38.1	50.0
	10 Pupils from deprived areas +5 awards at level 5	41%	41.0	50.0	30.0		53.00	79.0
	11 Pupils from deprived areas +5 awards at level 6	16%	16.0	23.0	11.0		24.00	47.0
	12 Premature Mortality	4.4	4.4	4.4	5.9		3.40	3.0
	13 Good mental health	20%	20.0	23.0	16.0		26.00	30.0

## Fairer Fife Indicator definitions

	Indicator	Definition	Source
	1 Children in Poverty	Percent of children (under 16) in relative poverty	DWP, Children in low income families dataset
	2 Unemployment *	Claimant rate	NOMIS, Claimant count
	3 Median Gross Weekly Pay	Median gross weekly pay (£s), residence-based	NOMIS, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings
	4 Fuel Poverty	Percentage of households in fuel poverty	Scottish House Condition Survey
	5 Internet Users	Percentage of adults (16 plus) using the internet	Scottish Household Survey
	6 Voting Turnout	Percentage of eligible population voting in council elections	Elections
	7 Volunteering	Percentage of adults (16 plus) volunteering	Scottish Household Survey
	8 Leavers going to Positive Destinations	Percentage of school leavers with a positive destination (education, employment or training)	Skills Development Scotland
	9 Working Age with Qualifications	Percentage of working age population (16 plus) with qualifications degree level or above	Scotland's Census
	10 Pupils from deprived areas +5 awards at level 5	Percentage of pupils from deprived areas attaining 5 or more awards at SCQF level 5 (National 5)	Local Government Benchmarking Framework
	11 Pupils from deprived areas +5 awards at level 6	Percentage of pupils from deprived areas attaining 5 or more awards at SCQF level 6 (Higher)	Local Government Benchmarking Framework
	12 Premature Mortality	All cause mortality, under 75, rate per 1,000 population	National Records of Scotland
	13 Good mental health	Percentage of people with a GHQ-12 score of 4 or more	Scottish Health Survey

\* Note: the original Fairer Fife indicator was for Long-term unemployment (job seekers allowance over 6 months). Changes both to the benefits system and lack of reported data on duration means