

BUILDING BRIDGES TO OPPORTUNITY

Update to Housing and Community Service Scrutiny Panel - October 2025
Office of the Director of Public Health



I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- We are co-developing a whole system framework for Plymouth which describes what actions should be taken to tackle poverty and its effects and how this should be done.
- This has strong links with policies from the whole breadth of the Plymouth Plan supporting the work we are already doing as a council to improve the lives of people living in our communities and with strategic documents linked to the Plymouth Plan developed by both the Council and city partnerships.
- This was developed with partners and stakeholders from across the system with opportunity to input at phases across the development of the project. We linked with existing groups and communities to understand their lived experience and perspectives on poverty.
- The core outcome for this whole system approach to poverty is creating an environment where people do not fall into poverty, are able to lift themselves out of poverty, and experience less harm from poverty.

Building Bridges to Opportunity is about setting an environment where people...



and seeing our strategies and plans through these lenses

- Six themes were identified which describe what we as a system should be doing to achieve this outcome and nine themes were identified which describe the principles we should be working to as a system to tackle poverty.
- Next steps before submitting to Cabinet for approval are to:
 - Complete the mapping the Council's existing policies, plans, services and commissioned activity against the framework and identify where there are already action plans/activities contributing to this
 - Identify areas where there is potential for added value by linking these

- Review relevant developing government policy and initiatives in order to ensure that there is read across and future proofing built in
- Identify the measures and/or metrics will best help us understand how we are progressing towards this as a system
- Begin the development of a city and system-wide action plan to pull together all of the work that is happening in this area
- Develop an understandable, and potentially interactive, method for communicating the framework, action plan and metrics
- Sense check progress with people and partnerships involved in the process so far
- Return to Scrutiny for a further discussion
- Take each of these pieces of work to the Cabinet Advisory Group on Child Poverty

2. BACKGROUND

Plymouth City Council has a clear ambition to tackle poverty in the city and to raise the living standard of its residents. This is evident from commitments in the Plymouth Plan and other core council strategies. Whether it's the cost-of-living crisis that continues to persist, supporting residents and communities through the COVID pandemic or the ongoing impact on children living in poverty, the Council and its partners don't just respond, they are proactive in the work they undertake to support residents and communities and to ensure that every resident, young or old, has the opportunity to thrive, to fulfil their potential and ambitions, and be a positive contributor to society. The impact on and experience of children in the city remains a key driver of this work however we also recognise that poverty is a generational issue and action across the life-course is needed to address child poverty.

Plymouth City Council is deeply committed to improving the lives of Plymouth residents. We know the profound effect poverty has on people – it impacts everything from life expectancy to employment opportunities. Too many people are struggling, and this has been magnified by the current rising costs of essentials such as food and energy bills. We recognise that no one person or organisation holds all the levers to address poverty, so it is more important than ever that we work together with our partners to take tangible action and break down barriers to tackle poverty across the city. The core objectives for this system wide action against poverty are to create an environment where people are less likely to fall into poverty, more likely to be able to lift themselves out of poverty, and experience less harm when living in poverty. We recognise that the risks of poverty are also strongly linked to wider social context including the role of national government policy, as such these objectives were chosen to represent what we can achieve as a local system.

To maximise our opportunities this programme of work seeks to capture how current strategies, services, and initiatives are addressing poverty, identify areas of excellence and gaps in provision, and share learning across the organisation and with partners. To facilitate this, we have co-developed a whole-system framework with our partners and our residents which describes what action against poverty should look like in the city and how it should be done. This will be used to better understand where attention is already focussed and where there are opportunities to optimise and to work together better.

3. DRAFT FRAMEWORK

The framework has been developed using a co-design approach with engagement from organisations and individuals from across the wider Plymouth system, including partners from the VCSE and commercial sectors, and members of our communities.

The outcome from the engagement and system sense making sessions is a framework with six themes which describe what as a system we should be doing to address poverty in Plymouth. These themes are broad and describe a wide range of activities which we all can contribute towards in our personal and professional lives. Importantly the engagement work also clarified nine themes describing how these activities should be done to have the positive impact on poverty we would like to see. These have clear overlap with some of the principles of the programme identified by the Child Poverty Cabinet Advisory group but have been expanded to capture specific concerns and experiences raised during the engagement.

Draft Framework

Objectives – Set an environment where people...	Actions	Principles
Don't fall into poverty	Maximise individual potential	Trauma informed and compassionate approach
	Support individuals and families	Asset based
		Prevention focussed
Can lift themselves out of poverty	Maximise community potential	Driven by insights and meaningful measures of success
	Manage infrastructure and the environment	Working with communities of place, interest, and identity
		Life-course approach
Experience less harm from poverty	Develop an economy which works for residents	Co-production in a whole systems approach
	Deliver services with communities	Sustainable
		Address inequalities in experience and outcome

4. PLAN

Next steps before submitting to Cabinet for approval are to:

- 4.1. Complete the mapping the Council's existing policies, plans, services and commissioned activity against the framework and identify where there are already action plans/activities contributing to this
- 4.2. Identify areas where there is potential for added value by linking these
- 4.3. Review relevant developing government policy and initiatives in order to ensure that there is read across and future proofing built in
- 4.4. Identify the measures and/or metrics will best help us understand how we are progressing towards this as a system
- 4.5. Begin the development of a city and system-wide action plan to pull together all of the work that is happening in this area
- 4.6. Develop an understandable, and potentially interactive, method for communicating the framework, action plan and metrics
- 4.7. Sense check progress with people and partnerships involved in the process so far
- 4.8. Return to Scrutiny for a further discussion
- 4.9. Take each of these pieces of work to the Cabinet Advisory Group on Child Poverty

We expect this work to be complete in Spring/early summer 2026.