



**PERTH & KINROSS
ANTI-POVERTY
TASKFORCE**

PERTH & KINROSS ANTI-POVERTY TASKFORCE

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

Perth and Kinross is often seen as a relatively affluent area, yet the reality is stark: around 30,000 people live below the poverty line, and 27,200 of them experience deep or very deep poverty. Poverty impacts every aspect of life—health, life expectancy, education, employment prospects, and the opportunities people can access.

In 2024, the Tackling Poverty Strategy was launched. It highlighted the groups most at risk and the key barriers that keep people trapped in poverty. Building on this, 2025 saw the Anti-Poverty Task Force (APTF) focus on four priorities:

- Developing a clear, shared Action Plan with members.
- Strengthening partnerships across the public and third sectors, supported by robust governance.
- Increasing direct community engagement to raise awareness of our aims locally.
- Exploring meaningful ways for people with lived experience of poverty to participate in shaping change.

Alongside these priorities, we worked on two key aims this year:

- Strengthening the Taskforce as a collective, ensuring collaboration and shared ownership of solutions.
- Increasing our public profile and connecting people to support, so that those affected by poverty know where to turn and feel empowered to access help.

The Anti-Poverty Task Force continues to work towards a clear and ambitious vision:

‘A Perth and Kinross where everyone can live well, free from poverty and inequality.’

WHO WE ARE AND OUR PURPOSE

The APTF is a cross-sector partnership that brings together:

- Elected members, Perth & Kinross Council (PKC) services, NHS Tayside, Perth & Kinross Third Sector Interface, Third sector organisations, education providers, and business partners.



Our purpose is to make things better for people who find themselves in poverty in P&K.

We can do this by:

- Using our understanding of the drivers of poverty in our different localities to see what services are in place to support our communities.
- Identify gaps in this support and consider any areas where there is duplication of effort.
- Harness our collective knowledge to change what we can locally and to design services that meet what people tell us they need.
- Drive change that is lasting and has an impact on poverty.

Building in 2024: A Quick Look Back



2024 set the direction of travel:

- Tackling Poverty Strategy adopted by Full Council (October 2024) and endorsed by APTF members (November 2024). This was covered by STV news raising the public profile.
- Clear thematic priorities outlined as areas of focus: Public debt, Transport, Childcare, Employability and Financial Insecurity.
- Initial 1:1 meetings with all members to re-energise the Taskforce and identify priorities.
- First Community Roadshow during Challenge Poverty Week.
- Relationship building so that the taskforce members feel part of a collective; this includes key anchor organisations such as NHS Tayside, Perth CAB, PKAVS and PKC Services such as Welfare Rights.

This created the platform for 2025 to focus on coordinated delivery and a shared Action Plan.

2025 Highlights

Aim 1: Strengthening the Taskforce as a collective.

- Shared Action Plan: A 5-year plan with key thematic areas
- Governance & Accountability:
 - Quarterly and transparent reporting to all partners
 - Strengthened link to work being carried out LEP and Economic Partnership
 - Ambition to embed co-production and lived experience in decision making.
- Thematic Subgroups:
 - Key relationships forged across anchor organisations.
 - Financial Insecurity, Employability, Public Debt, Transport – all operational with clear next steps for 2026.
- Capacity Building:
 - Training on Social Needs Screening, FORT referrals, and rights-based approaches.



2025 Highlights

Aim 2: Rising the public profile and connecting people to support

- **Community Support Events:**

- Delivered across urban and rural areas; aligned with free public transport days to reduce barriers.
- Practical support offered: benefits checks, debt advice, energy guidance.

- **Challenge Poverty Week:**

- 24 partner organisations involved: cultural outreach via libraries and museums.
- Increased visibility and reduced stigma.

- **Communication & Engagement:**

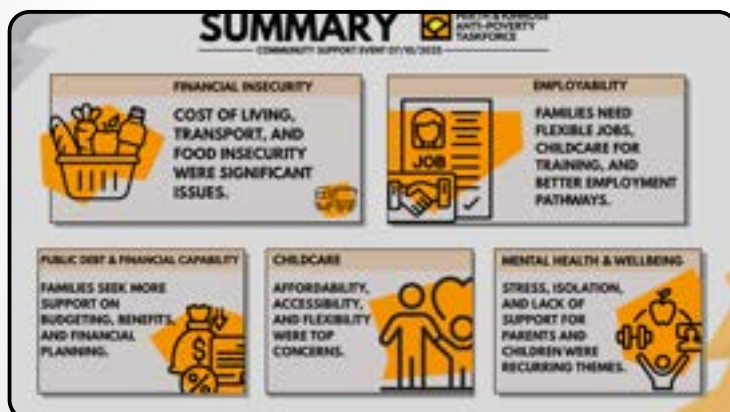
- Launch of LinkedIn and Facebook pages.
- Monthly themes in 2026 Communications Calendar (e.g., Financial Reset, Transport, Challenge Poverty Week).

- **Lived Experience Voices:**

- Linking to locality working in communities and capturing.
- Application to CPAP funding to embed co-production and lived experience in decision-making.

- **Public Transport & Access:**

- Advocate for free travel and family activities during Challenge Poverty Week 2026.



2025 Highlights

Action Plan Development

Throughout early 2025, APTF Project Manager worked with PKC services, steering group members and partners to develop a 5-year Action Plan focused on four core objectives:

- Addressing the rising cost of living
- Increasing income from employment
- Maximising income from social security and other benefits
- Reducing stigma and promoting available support

Key progress in 2025:

- Draft Action Plan circulated to members for comment (June 2025).
- Agreement that the plan must be action-focused, measurable and aligned to the Tackling Poverty Strategy and statutory child poverty duties.
- Strengthening relationships within the APTF members to work towards an aim of local, joint decision making when tackling poverty.
- Focus on analysing the wealth of existing data across thematic areas.
- Bringing together the different stakeholders that are already working in these thematic areas to encourage a joined up strategic approach.
- The Equalities, Human Rights & Civil Justice Committee visited Blairgowrie and Rattray to hear directly from rural residents about these challenges. The APTF was proud to support this visit, helping ensure rural voices are heard in the decisions that affect them.

The Action Plan is the framework that connects strategic goals to tackle poverty to thematic subgroup delivery and community activity.

2025 Highlights

Governance & Full Members Meetings

Two key Full Members Meetings in February and May 2025

February 2025 - Out in the community at Perth UHI members had the opportunity to feed into the draft action plan. Feedback from this group included:

- There was a clear focus on getting governance right.
- Clearer, SMART (er)-outcomes and evaluation.
- Rights-based approach to tackling poverty, and stronger links between the newly formed PKC Poverty Board and APTF.
- APTF to be the link to the CPP and Programme for Government priorities.

May 2025 - Out in the community at Perth CAB members had the opportunity to hear what is happening in the poverty space already and what PKC could adopt.

- Perth CAB presented on Social Needs Screening and the FORT referral system, central to a Cash First approach and better coordination of support.
- Poverty Alliance shared best practice and learnings from Taking Action on Rural Poverty in Aberdeenshire, shaping APTF's thinking on rural voices and lived experience.
- Members agreed commitments around:
 - Capturing the voice of in-work poverty.
 - Strengthening links with LEP, NHS, and thematic groups.
 - Reporting on challenges and gaps within each subgroup.
 - And there was a clear call to action for PKC to resource the action plan priorities.

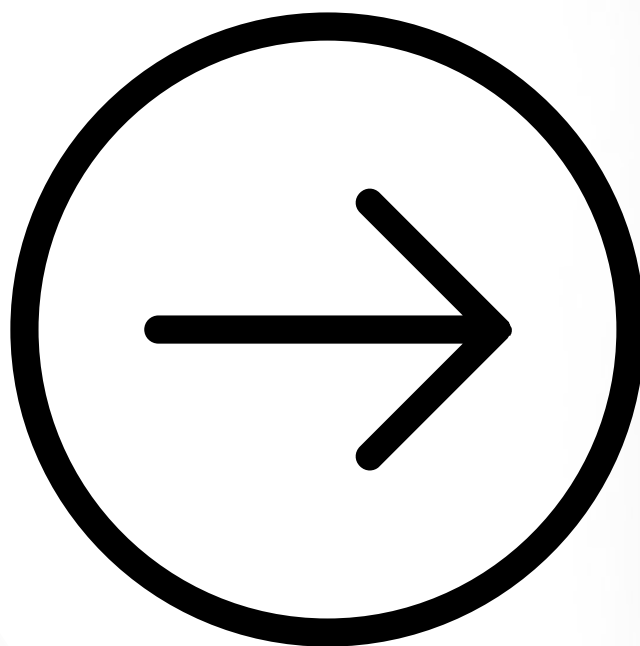
2025 Highlights

Thematic Subgroups - Progress

In order to bring together our subgroups, time has been invested by the Project Manager to build trust and to create the correct conditions for a collaborative approach. This has involved many 1:1 meetings. The subgroups have now gained momentum, and all have had an initial meeting to identify scope of each group.

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2025 Highlights

Thematic Subgroups - Progress

Subgroup	Focus / Objective	Leads & Members	Progress to Date	Next Steps (2026)
1. Financial Insecurity	Reduce financial insecurity by improving access to advice, food, income supports, fuel/energy support and early intervention.	Lead: Chris Birt Members: PKC, APTF, Perth CAB, Home Energy Scotland, Aberlour, PKAVS, NHS, DWP, Perth & Kinross Food Bank, Poverty Alliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group established Nov 2025. Initial sharing of baseline data to identify priorities and gaps Agreement that subgroup will feed into Cash-First work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand membership to rural and community organisations. Identify action areas (e.g., food access model, /Card initiatives). Develop data-tracking tools for financial insecurity. Identify funding to support action delivery.
2. Employability	Support people into fair, sustainable employment by reducing barriers such as transport, childcare, skills gaps and low pay.	Lead: Jamie May Members: PKC, DWP, NHS, Change Org, Aviva, TSI, APTF, LEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group formed Dec 2025. Purpose, guiding principles and priority areas agreed. Early mapping of employability pathways underway, including identification of key transition points where people disengage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Map existing services and identify duplication. Joint pilots around employer engagement, rural barriers & in-work poverty. Strengthen links with Transport Group.
3. Public Debt	Address the burden of public sector debt by improving early intervention, fair recovery, and access to debt advice.	Leads: Heather Kelly, Frances Harvey, Richard Lister Members: PKC Council Tax, PKC Housing, Welfare Rights, Perth CAB Debt Team, APTF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group formed May 2025. Initial scoping meeting held. Case-study approach developed with Aberlour. Early mapping of recovery processes and barriers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce subgroup report with recommendations. Map referral pathways to debt support. Develop a draft "Fair Debt Charter" for PKC consideration. Align with Scottish Cash-First work. Pilot poverty-sensitive debt communication templates and compare outcomes with current practice
4. Transport	Improve affordable, reliable transport access to services, work, health and education.	Leads: Mark Speed, James Cooper Members: PKC, NHS Tayside, UHI, TSI	<p>Group launched Aug 2025.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mapping of transport poverty hotspots. Locality-focused project. Engagement with community groups and minibus applicants to identify unmet needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify transport funding streams. Recruit community voices. Strengthen cross-working with Employability and Financial Insecurity groups.

2025 Highlights

Community Support Events – Connecting People to Support

Throughout 2025, the APTF continued to deliver local, place-based Community Support Events across Perth & Kinross, bringing advice, services, and practical help directly into communities. These events took place in both urban and rural areas to ensure fair access for residents regardless of location.

A key focus this year has been removing the practical barriers that prevent people from seeking help - particularly transport costs, which remain one of the biggest challenges for many households. To increase engagement, several events were intentionally scheduled on the first Saturday of the month, aligning with Perth & Kinross Council's free public transport initiative. This allowed families and individuals on the lowest incomes to attend without facing cost-related barriers, increasing engagement and reducing inequity.

We also hosted events in a variety of venues - shopping centres, village halls, community campuses, and local hubs - to make sessions feel more accessible, familiar, and community-led. This flexible approach helped improve participation and reach people who may not typically engage with services.

Date	Location / Ward
Saturday 1 February 2025	Ward 12 – Perth City
Saturday 1 March 2025	Ward 12 – Perth City
Thursday 27 March 2025	Ward 1 – Carse of Gowrie
Friday 25 April 2025	Ward 3 – Blairgowrie & Glens
Wednesday 21 May 2025	Ward 10 – Perth City South
Tuesday 26 June 2025	Ward 1 – Carse of Gowrie
Saturday 5 July 2025	Ward 12 – Perth City
Thursday 14 August 2025	Ward 8 – Kinross-shire

2025 Highlights

Community Support Events – Connecting People to Support

Support Offered at Events

Each event brought together a wide range of partners to provide practical, on-the-spot support, including:

- Income maximisation, benefits checks and rights advice
- Debt support, budgeting and money guidance
- Energy and fuel efficiency advice
- Access to local services and wellbeing support
- Information for new residents, including refugees and migrant families

Partners Involved

Events were delivered in collaboration with a strong multi-agency network, including:

Home Energy Scotland, Trading Standards Scotland, Christians Against Poverty, Perthshire Welfare Society, AbilityNet, The Heat Project, Bari Food, PKAVS, Perth Citizens Advice Bureau, PKC Welfare Rights, The Walled Garden & Wisecraft, Aberlour Children's Charity, Local employability and community partners, ...and many others.

These partnerships demonstrate the shared commitment across sectors to supporting people through the cost-of-living crisis.

Impact and Learning - The 2025 Community Support Events have:

- Increased awareness of local support pathways
- Reduced stigma by bringing services into everyday community spaces
- Provided early help, preventing issues from becoming crises
- Highlighted transport as a key barrier for low-income families
- Reinforced the value of place-based, cash-first and person-centred approaches
- Captured lived experience insights which now inform theme subgroup priorities
- Enabled stronger PKC frontline presence across wards and improved visibility of local services
- 35 people supported so far.
- Energy bills & fuel costs: top concern.
- Benefits checks & UC issues: high demand.
- Transport barriers for Ukrainian families identified (Ward 3) → referrals made.
- Energy advice needs increasing across wards.

2025 Highlights

Training, Tools & Capacity Building

During 2025, the APTF brought partners together to share knowledge, build capacity and embed common tools and practices, helping create a more joined-up and effective response to poverty:

- The APTF partnered with Nourish Scotland and Perth CAB to host a workshop “Progressing the Right to Food in Perth & Kinross” at the Civic Hall, Perth.
- Support & Connect Training – equipping staff across the third sector to use the Social Needs Screening Tool and FORT referral system, and to have confident conversations about financial hardship by Perth CAB.
- Promotion of Social Security Scotland benefits, School Age Payment, Best Start Grants and Pension Age Disability Payment.
- Work with Public Health, Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy, and Tayside Infant Food Insecurity Pathway to ensure poverty is not treated in isolation, but as a key determinant of health.
- Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee at the Scottish Parliament visit to P&K.

This reflects the APTF’s commitment to a whole-system, rights-based and dignity-driven approach, helping to build a skilled, informed and connected workforce equipped to reduce poverty across Perth & Kinross.

Data, Learning & Policy Context

2025 has also been a year of learning from national insight, including:

- UK Poverty 2025 (JRF) – highlighting continuing high levels of poverty and the need for systemic solutions
- Evidence on deep poverty among families in Scotland, particularly for families with young children, disabled family members, and larger households
- National work on public debt and arrears, reinforcing the importance of APTF's Public Debt Panel
- Regular engagement with PKC services, including Welfare Rights, Housing, Employability, Transport, Education and Community Learning & Development.
- Close collaboration with NHS Tayside, connecting poverty-related work with mental health, early intervention, public health data and the new Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2025–2035.
- Third Sector partnership building, linking with organisations addressing food insecurity, crisis support, energy advice, employability and financial wellbeing.
- Stronger links with Community Planning Partnership structures, ensuring the APTF voice is heard within the Poverty, Employability and Health workstreams.
- Insights from Challenge Poverty Week 2025 contributed to subgroup planning and community engagement priorities.

All this underscores that while local partnerships like APTF cannot solve poverty alone, they are crucial to making national policy work on the ground.

Priorities for 2026

To maintain momentum and deliver meaningful progress for individuals and families, the APTF has identified six key priorities for the year ahead:

Strengthen Subgroup Delivery

- Implement pilot projects that address priority barriers
- Expand participation to include more partners and lived-experience voices

Improve Measurement & Data Sharing

- Standardise indicators across all thematic areas
- Develop shared systems to track outcomes and measure change

Enhance Community Engagement

- Continue to reduce stigma by promoting rights-based messaging
- Ensure support is visible, accessible, trusted, and delivered in ways that reduce stigma

Drive System Change & Prevention

- Influence local and national policy — particularly around transport, income security and Fair Work
- Focus on preventative action that reduces crisis intervention

Strengthen Governance & Accountability

- Report progress clearly and regularly to partners and the public
- Embed co-production and lived experience into decision-making
- Ensure transparent reporting to PKC, CPP and partners via quarterly dashboards

Deliver an APTF Annual Conference & Strengthen Collective Impact (New Priority)

- Host the first APTF Annual Conference in 2026, bringing together thematic subgroups, partners, community organisations and people with lived experience.
- Each thematic subgroup will prepare a 2026 Progress and Impact Report to be presented at the conference.
- Bring together insights across subgroups to create a single, shared narrative on local poverty and coordinated action.
- Seek support for free public transport and free family activities during Challenge Poverty Week 2026 to reduce participation.

Request for Endorsement & Support

To deliver the APTF Action Plan and the priorities for 2026, the Anti-Poverty Taskforce - which includes PKC services, elected members, NHS Tayside, third sector partners, community organisations and local anchor institutions.

1. Support for the Action Plan & 2026 Priorities

Endorsement of the Action Plan and annual priorities will help ensure a consistent and coordinated approach across partners.

2. Support for Key Delivery Activities

We ask for assistance to strengthen:

- Community Support Events 2026, including PKC frontline participation and use of free transport days where possible
- The APTF Annual Conference 2026, bringing subgroup updates and lived experience insight together
- Challenge Poverty Week 2026, including opportunities to improve access and participation across local communities

3. Embedding Poverty-Sensitive Practice

Support is requested to maintain consistent approaches in areas such as:

- cash-first responses.
- clear and supportive communication.
- wider use of Social Needs Screening and FORT referrals.
- improved information sharing to reduce duplication.

4. Strengthening Data & Governance

We ask for continued collaboration to:

- develop shared indicators
- strengthen insight and reporting
- maintain a clear link between the APTF and relevant governance structures

Sustained support from PKC services, elected members and partners will help ensure that the APTF can continue delivering a coordinated, practical and community-focused approach to reducing poverty across Perth & Kinross.

Conclusion

2025 has been a year of deepening collaboration, clearer planning, and stronger community engagement across the APTF. Our collective efforts have strengthened the foundations needed to deliver long-term, system-level change in Perth & Kinross.

Throughout the year, the APTF has:

- Turned the Tackling Poverty Strategy into a live, operational Action Plan, endorsed by elected members and full APTF membership in August 2025.
- Strengthened relationships across sectors, building trust and shared ownership
- Started to join up data, tools and lived experience, creating clearer pathways for measuring progress.
- Increased visibility and accessibility of support, particularly through our Community Support Events model.
- Used free public transport days and varied community support events to reduce participation barriers and improve engagement.
- Enabled joint learning and collaboration through Support & Connect training, thematic subgroups and shared practice.
- Embedded voices of lived experience, supporting more grounded and meaningful recommendations.

The partnership is now:

- Better connected.
- More strategically focused.
- Clearer about what needs to happen next.
- Aligned around shared priorities and measurable goals.

Communication has also improved across partners, supported by:

- The launch of the APTF LinkedIn page (April 2025).
- The upcoming launch of the APTF Facebook page to connect with the wider public (Dec 2025).
- Regular newsletters and updates.
- Clearer signposting via community events and shared digital resources.
- Increasing awareness of tools such as Social Needs Screening and the FORT shared referral system.

Looking ahead, the work of the APTF will continue to require collaboration, transparency, persistence and a commitment to acting on the needs people tell us matter most.

With strengthened governance, clearer pathways, a 2026 APTF Annual Conference to bring collective insights together, and enhanced commitments for Challenge Poverty Week 2026, the APTF enters the new year with a strong, united foundation for impactful action.

Appendix A: Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) 2026

APTF Thematic Groups – Updated 2026 KPIs (with data collection & analysis built in)

Theme	2026 KPI	Measure	Deadline
Financial Insecurity	Establish a standard approach for data collection, barrier analysis, and priority-group insight across SNS/FORT and partner services	Framework completed and used by all partners	Jun 2026
	Increase early help through Social Needs Screening (SNS) & FORT referrals	+20% increase in early financial support referrals	Oct 2026
	Expand cash-first emergency support options available across P&K	Cash-first approach available in 3 additional community locations	Aug 2026
	Reduce repeat crisis support (food, energy, emergency payments)	15% reduction in repeat requests	Dec 2026
	Create a P&K Financial Wellbeing Pathway that joins up benefits, debt, budgeting, and energy advice	Pathway designed & adopted by partners	Dec 2026
Employability	Produce a shared data and insight report mapping barriers for priority groups (transport, childcare, health, digital access)	Report completed & published	Jul 2026
	Create a full mapping of employability provision	Directory completed	May 2026
	Increase engagement of priority groups (lone parents, disabled people, young parents, rural residents)	+10% participation	Dec 2026
	Pilot one project addressing in-work poverty	Pilot launched & evaluated	Nov 2026
	Recruit 10 new employers to the Fair Work/ progression agenda	10 employers engaged	Dec 2026

Appendix

Theme	2026 KPI	Measure	Deadline
Transport	Deliver a data and needs analysis on rural communities (access to healthcare, employment, education)	Analysis completed & shared	Jun 2026
	Pilot a rural transport support scheme for healthcare access	Pilot launched; usage tracked	Sept 20...
	Reduce missed appointments (linked to transport poverty)	10% reduction	Dec 2026
	Complete employability-focused transport mapping	Report completed	Jun 2026
	Secure funding for one community transport enhancement	Funding secured	Dec 2026
Public Debt	Complete a full data analysis of public debt trends (arrears, recovery methods, high-risk groups)	Report published	Apr 2026
	Produce and approve a Public Debt Charter for coordinated poverty-sensitive collections	Charter approved	Oct 2026
	Reduce multiple simultaneous debt letters	25% reduction	Dec 2026
	Create a shared debt information repository	Repository operational	Mar 2026
	Increase PKC frontline presence at Community Support Events , ensuring at least 80% of events include direct representation from PKC services	PKC presence recorded at 80% of events by Dec 2026.	Dec 2026

Appendix B - Communications

APTF Communications Calendar 2026

Month	Theme / Focus	Key Messaging & Content Areas
January	Financial Reset Month	Benefits checks; Council Tax Reduction; Warm spaces; Winter support; UC Migration updates
February	Cost of Living Support	Energy and fuel support; Cash-first messaging; Debt help; Budgeting tools; SNS/FORT pathways
March	Transport & Accessibility	Free First Saturday travel; Rural transport challenges; Community transport updates; Accessible travel info
April	New Entitlements & Local Support	Council Tax discounts; School meals & clothing grants; Carers Support Payment; Start-of-year income advice
May	Employability & Skills	Jobs and recruitment; Skills training; Fair Work highlights; Employability success stories
June	Families & Child Poverty	Best Start Grants; Best Start Foods; School holiday support; Early years family support
July	Summer Support & Wellbeing	Holiday food & fun; Family activities; Rural transport help; Fuel & energy summer tips
August	Back to School	School Age Payment; Income maximisation; Digital access support; Uniform/equipment support
September	Debt Awareness & Prevention	Council tax arrears help; Rent arrears; Public Debt Charter messaging; Budgeting help; Debt myth-busting
October	Challenge Poverty Week	National themes; Partner spotlight; Community events; Lived experience stories; Good practice sharing
November	Winter Preparedness	Fuel poverty prevention; Warm home discounts; Energy efficiency; Winter emergency supports
December	Reflection & Support	Annual impact summary; Partner thanks; Winter hardship support; Emergency funds; Look ahead to 2027