**Challenging Child Poverty**

South Lanarkshire Greens hosted an evening bringing together about 40 people from the East Kilbride area concerned about the rising levels of child poverty. Currently 26% of children in Scotland live in poverty. With the introduction of benefit caps, Universal Credit, two child limits for child benefit, and cost of living increasing this is forecast to increase to 37% by 2022. The discussion was lead by Darren McGarvey, author of Poverty Safari and local resident, and Twimukye Mushaka from the Poverty Alliance Get Heard project, and chaired by local Green campaigner Kirsten Robb.

Long term adversity resulting from poverty results in adaptations in children to help them cope, changes in how they perceive the world and interact with society, which persist into adulthood contributing to lower educational attainment, mental illness, and anti-social behaviour.

The Scottish Government has produced a Child Poverty Act, with an associated delivery plan and establishing a Poverty and Inequality Commission, setting a target of reducing childhood poverty by 2030. This focusses on income and family finances, and there are questions about the affordability of steps to meet these targets at a time of budget cuts. However, the Child Poverty Act provides an opportunity for communities and other organisations to challenge local and national government regarding meeting the delivery plan over the next three years, and a role for people to monitor the delivery of the plan.

The challenges of child poverty require communities to work together, to engage with and act in partnership with those who experience poverty, to address distorted perceptions and stigma. The evening was a step towards further cooperation between local people and organisations in addressing the challenges of child poverty in East Kilbride.

The evening was streamed live, and can be viewed at <https://livestream.com/IndependenceLive/events/8245962>

Pull Quote:

“26% of children in Scotland live in poverty … forecast to increase to 37% by 2022.”