



what
matters
to **you**

Doing Data Differently

Report from 21 May 2026 event

Event organised by WM2U and funded by
The Hunter Foundation and BBC Children in Need

Welcome and Opening Comments

Lynn Hendry

There has been little progress in achieving Scotland's ambitions to end child poverty; to create more resilient communities and secure more responsive public services. In addition, the indisputable truth is that there will be no additional funding, at scale, in the short or long-term.

The status quo is not an option but transformation is possible. A new Scottish Government could change and respond to examples across Scotland which support preventative, relational approaches that empower communities to be actively engaged in decisions that will support their communities, families, children and young people. The evidence is clear – these approaches work.

National agencies are signalling that they want to change. So are independent funders. What can we achieve by working together to support prevention? What are the conditions required to achieve this approach?

This event is designed to shape this conversation; provide hope and practical ways for achieving the shift towards prevention. It will demonstrate the importance of learning by using data and stories to transform services with community voice and leadership at the centre.

Speakers

Ruth Glassborow

Ruth Glassborow is Director of Population Health and Wellbeing at Public Health Scotland, where she leads work focussed on reducing health inequalities and improving healthy life expectancy.

Ruth's overarching message was:
Together We Can.

Ruth acknowledged the pressures on 'downstream' services and the challenge to 'get upstream' within a system that demands compliance and performance metrics via inspection and audit reports.

Ruth argued if we can align between **Will** (building and maintaining), **Ideas** (evidence informed) and **Implementation** (ability), we can achieve alignment between:

- accountability structures
- risk frameworks
- measures that preference prevention whilst still responding to downstream work
- financial flows
- ringfencing budget on prevention

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Celeste Berteau

Celeste Berteau is a Transformation Coach at the Improvement Service. She described the SAVVI (Scalable Approach to Vulnerability via Interoperability) approach to tackling child poverty, which supports local government to make better use of existing data to identify individuals and families in need of support before they reach a crisis point.

Celeste showed that data linkage is proving possible and that barriers to data sharing can be overcome while fully meeting data-protection responsibilities. When following the SAVVI process, a dedicated specialist team supports services to work together to legally, ethically and transparently find people who might need help, enabling services to get upstream of issues such as financial hardship.

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Speakers (continued)

Stephanie Crisp

Stephanie Crisp, Insights and Improvement Lead at The Promise Scotland spoke about the Promise Story of Progress, as part of Scotland's Plan 24-30, which brings together evidence, learning and voices that, taken together, help show how Scotland is keeping the promise. These perspectives can help Scotland understand both how change is being made and what difference it makes to people's lives.



National data shows what is changing, organisational learning shows how change is happening, and experience shows why those changes matter.



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Peter Allan

Peter Allan from Dundee's Chief Executive's office focussed on poverty reduction. Peter introduced how Dundee's community planning partners, (CPP) are aiming to drive a preventative, voice-led approach within the context of national reporting requirements and local priorities.

From a CPP perspective, Peter said we need to be honest about what is actually achievable. Right now, we can compare our context to an escalator going down faster and faster, due to events outwith our control, while we are trying to push upstream. But we must do what is possible – use highly localised data; have a clear understanding of successes and failures; think about recovery as the flipside of prevention.

The same approaches can help people downstream to start moving up and can prevent the people upstream going further down.

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Workshops

Workshop 1

Sean and Katie Upsdale led the workshop to share its development of a model that will help assess the socio-economic value of a preventative and voice-led approach to empowering children, young people, families and communities in Dundee.

While this is a work in progress, Sean and Katie shared the methodology through groupwork and an exercise in assessing the financial costs and benefits of a voice-led, community-based, empowerment approach.

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Realistically if voice-led, whole family support outcomes are to be achieved, we all need to know:

- i. the sustainable impact of support on families;
- ii. the progress over time towards achieving these outcomes
- iii. judgements by leaders on those actions that are effective and the improvements that will achieve the greatest benefit
- iv. how to quantify the financial benefit of an approach rather than an intervention; and
- v. how to be able to articulate these financial benefits.

Workshops (continued)

Workshop 2

Kerstin Jorna, Senior Research and Information Officer, Children and Families, Dundee City Council and Jo Kennedy Animate Consulting, WM2U Learning Partner.

Kerstin and Jo shared the development of the Dundee WM2U learning approach.

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This is based on:

- We need both quantitative and qualitative data for decision making
- We should stop doing pure data collection/ reporting and make space for learning
- We must emphasise the value of stories as a key component of decision making – how do people feel their lives have changed – or not?
- We also need a theory of change / logic model, which our data (quantitative and qualitative) feeds into – there are decades of research available telling us what works – use it rather than try to re-prove it (don't reinvent the wheel)

Closing speaker

John McKendrick

John McKendrick: Professor of Social Justice at Glasgow Caledonian University ,co-director of Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit (SPIRU) and Scotland's Commissioner for Fair Access since 2023 provided a national overview of the potential for progress towards achieving a preventative approach.

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John highlighted the learning from the last seven rounds of child poverty plans that give reasons to be optimistic:

- Shift to an adapt and adopt approach – no more stop start or chasing the new and shiny.
- A learning culture in place – local and national and across sectors
- Exit strategies that leave progress intact and are sustained
- Don't need to keep evaluating specific interventions. Need to shift to looking at approaches that produce and sustain change
- Alignment from Scottish Government, third sector and independent funders

John highlighted the May 2026 Scottish Parliament elections results and reasons why it is imperative for all working to achieve a socially just Scotland not to lose hope but to be vocal in making the arguments for prioritising ending child poverty and also make the shift towards achieving these conditions for change.

Conclusion

No strategy to end child poverty can be effective or sustainable without empowering families and communities to lead, make decisions and take action to change and improve the supports and services available to children, young people and families and, in turn, prevent needs and crises escalating.

And we can only be effective if we value what matters to families.

We heard this requires us to do data differently – combining evidence with lived experience. Recognising stories, voice and participation as essential forms of intelligence - not secondary to the numbers, but central to understanding impact.

It means using measurement not simply to prove value, but to learn how lasting preventative change actually happens.



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