

Using Third-Party Datasets to Identify Need

How-to Guide

This guide offers more detailed information and advice for those who may be interested in adopting or adapting the initiative in their local area.

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Title	Evaluating the usefulness of third-party datasets for identifying communities in need of financial support.
Organisation	Argyll and Bute Council
Category	Emerging
Poverty Impact	Mitigation
Introduction to the Project	
The project strives to identify unmet need in Argyll and Bute, informing the Council's work to target existing resources towards tackling poverty. It is a pilot project, involving four schools that will soon merge into two schools. It uses additional CACI datasets and overlays these with existing council and DWP information to help identify pockets of unmet and unsupported need. It will then inform the actions of Argyll and Bute Council's Welfare Rights officers. It is structured in two stages:	

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Stage 1: Evaluate the quality of the CACI data by comparing it with other datasets internal and external to the Council. If successful, the project will progress to Stage 2.

Stage 2: Evaluate the impact of this targeted approach, informed by the CACI data, to gauge if the approach was successful or not.

The intent is to scale up the project to include schools. However, the Stage 1 data quality evaluation requirements were not met and so the project did not advance to impact evaluation.

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Initial Idea

Who had the initial idea?			
The Improvement Service.			
How did the idea for the project come about?			
The Improvement Service signposted Argyll and Bute Council to the Child Poverty Accelerator Fund.			
Were plans informed by any published reports / papers / research evidence or practice from elsewhere?			
No.			
Was anyone else involved in developing the initial idea of the project?			
No.			
Were those with lived experience of poverty involved in developing the initial idea of the project?			
No.			
Was funding required to support the development of the initial idea of the project?			
No		Yes	
		✓	
Please provide details of the funding that was used to support the development of the initial idea of the project.			
Which organisation provided funding?		The Scottish Government.	
How much was required?		£17,000.	
What was the specific source of funding? (e.g., particular grant or policy)		Child Poverty Practice Accelerator Fund (CPAF) Grant.	

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Were specific resources – other than funding - needed when developing the initial idea of the project?			
No		Yes	
		✓	
Please provide details of the resources that were required when developing the initial idea of the project.			
Staff/Volunteer Time	Staff time was devoted to developing the funding bid. No extra funding was required for this.		
Facilities / Workspace	N/A		
Equipment	Some laptops were needed		
Local Knowledge	Help from the Education, Revenues & Benefits and Data Protection teams in the Council.		
Food and Drink	N/A		
What, if any, barriers had to be overcome when developing the initial idea of the project?			
Some stakeholders concluded that third party data would not be reliable. Therefore, those advocating for the project had to assert its potential value. Even if assumptions about third party data reliability were valid, it would be better to prove that this was the case with a systematic approach that tested the data quality and provided feedback to the supplier, CACI, on what would need to be improved to resolve data quality concerns. The third-party data did end up having issues related to its quality.			
What, if anything, helped enable development of the initial idea of the project?			
Knowing that this innovation would either assist the Welfare Rights team or would provide specific details to CACI on the product's data quality issues enabled the development of the initial idea.			
How long did it take between having the initial idea and starting the project?			
November 2023 to January 2024.			
Who made the decision to introduce the project?			
The Head of Service in the Children and Families division, which is a team within the Health and Social Care Partnership.			

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Early Development – Pilot Project or Feasibility Study

Was there a pilot project or feasibility study?			
			No
Yes, this is a pilot project – details of the project are provided elsewhere in this guide			✓
			Yes, a feasibility study
What did the pilot study or feasibility study involve?			
The project involves testing the quality of the CACI data against other sources of information.			
Who was responsible for the design and/or delivery of the pilot or feasibility study?			
The Data Programme Manager.			
Were those with lived experience of poverty among those involved in the design or delivery of the pilot project or feasibility study			
			No
			✓
			Yes
Was funding required to support the pilot project or feasibility study?			
No			Yes
			✓
Please provide details of the funding that was used to support the pilot project or feasibility study.			
Which organisation provided funding?		The Scottish Government.	
How much was required?		£17,000.	
What was the specific source of funding?		CPAF Grant.	
Were specific resources needed to support the pilot project or feasibility study?			
No		N/A	Yes
			N/A

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Please provide details of the resources that were required for the pilot project or feasibility study.	
Staff/Volunteer Time	N/A
Facilities / Workspace	N/A
Equipment	N/A
Local Knowledge	N/A
Food and Drink	N/A
Was the pilot project or feasibility study evaluated?	
No	N/A
Yes	N/A
Was there evidence from the pilot project or feasibility study that confirmed that it was working / it would work?	
No	N/A
Yes	N/A
Who made the decision to continue with the project beyond the pilot or feasibility study?	
The budget holder will decide once the pilot is complete on the basis of a recommendation from the Data Programme Manager and overall review by the Council's Data Advisory Group.	
Was the design of the project modified following the pilot project or feasibility study?	
No	N/A
Yes	N/A
Not applicable as Pilot is still in progress.	

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Accessing the Service and Engaging with Service Users

Is there a referral process?		
	No	
	Yes	✓
The Welfare Rights Team has an existing portfolio of referrals from different places. The project will then give the Welfare Rights Teams the new candidate referral households.		
Is referral the only way that potential clients are made aware of the project?		
	Yes	
	No	✓
Other than referral, how do potential clients come to know about the project?		
The Welfare Rights team engages with households through Social Work and Social Care, Education and through Argyll and Bute Council contact centres.		
What is the most common way through which users typically access the service?		
Social Work.		
Do you take steps to keep in touch / reach out to service users?		
	No	
	Yes	✓
The plan is for the Welfare Rights team to engage with households, provide them with advice and then maintain relationships with them. However, this is still to happen at the current stage of the project.		

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Working with People with Lived Experience of Poverty

Are those with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>delivering</u> the project?	
No	✓
Yes	
Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>managing</u> the project or project governance?	
No	✓
Yes	
Are people with lived experience of poverty involved <u>in any other aspect</u> of the project? <i>If so, please describe below.</i>	
No	✓
Yes	

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Leadership, Governance and Partnership Working

Who is responsible for managing the project?	
David Murdoch (Data Programme Manager).	
Is this the only responsibility of the person managing the project?	
Yes	
No	✓
As Data Programme Manager, David has multiple roles in other projects.	
What proportion of the manager's overall workload is given over to this project?	
Most of it	
About half of it	
Just a small proportion of it	✓
Is there a Project Steering or Advisory Group?	
No	
Yes	✓
There are updates from the project to the Child Poverty Action Group which is a group within the council.	
Are any other governance arrangements in place to review strategy and performance?	
No	✓
Yes	

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Links to Wider Policies, Strategies and Statutory Requirements

In your opinion, is the project aligned with national and/or local anti-poverty strategies and priorities (e.g., local authority or health board priorities)?	
Don't know	
No	
Yes	✓
The project involves finding and helping households that are being excluded from existing measures. It also looks to maximise current resources used to tackle poverty.	
In your opinion, has the project benefitted from being part of this anti-poverty strategy?	
Don't know	
No	
Yes	✓
Because of its high priority it has helped obtain data quicker from the Council.	
Is the project part of any other strategy?	
Don't know	
No	
Yes	✓
The project is part of the Council's 2024–2028 data strategy which looks to use data and evidence-driven decision-making at every level of the Council. https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s210462/Data_Strategy_and_Action_Plan_2024_28_PandRv1.2.pdf	
In your opinion, has the project benefitted from being part of this strategy?	
Don't know	
No	
Yes	✓
It has made making requests easier as it is an advancement of the Council's data strategy.	
Is the project delivering a service that is a statutory commitment?	
No	
Yes	✓
There is a statutory obligation to provide financial support when possible.	

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In your opinion, what has been the impact on the project of having this statutory commitment?

Don't know	N/A
None	N/A
Negative	N/A
Positive	N/A
Not applicable as still in pilot stages.	

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Funding

Has external funding been secured to support the work?		
No		
Yes		✓
Please provide details of the external funding that was used secured to support this work?		
Which organisation provided funding?	The Scottish Government.	
What was the specific funding stream/source/scheme?	CPAF grant.	
How much funding was secured?	£17,000.	
For how long has funding been secured?	One year.	
Is future funding from the same external source a possibility?		
Don't know		
No		✓
Yes		
Has a specific sum been secured from the host organisation to support this work?		
No		✓
Yes		
Is future funding from the host organisation a possibility?		
Don't know		
No		
Yes		✓
Is future funding from the host organisation based on pre-agreed outcomes or outputs being delivered?		
No		
Yes		
N/A		
What are the future - longer-term - prospects for this work if existing funding sources were no longer available?		
The project would replace the external funding with local authority funding subject to the evaluation of the data quality. This will only occur if the evaluation passes both stages: 1) that the CACI data is of high enough quality; 2) the data can be used to drive interventions.		

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Staffing and Resources

Do existing staff from the host organisation contribute toward the work of this project as part of their broader work for the organisation?			
No			
Yes			✓
There are staff that already work to tackle child poverty in Argyll and Bute. The project is just one part of the Council's overall tackling child poverty work.			
Are existing staff from the host organisation paid extra (for example, taking on extra hours) to contribute toward the work of this project?			
No			✓
Yes			
Have additional paid staff been employed to contribute toward the work of this project?			
No			✓
Yes			
Are volunteers involved in delivering the project?			
No			✓
Yes			
Are specific resources – other than staff/volunteer time and money - needed to support the delivery of the project?			
No			Yes ✓
Please provide details of the resources that are required to deliver the project?			
Facilities / Workspace	N/A		
Equipment	IT licences.		
Local Knowledge	N/A		
Food and Drink	N/A		

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Are any of the resources needed to deliver the project provided in-kind, rather than budgeted from project funds?	
No	✓
Yes	
Were new IT systems, additional software, or upgrades existing software (databases, Apps) required to deliver this project?	
No	✓
Yes	
Was additional training – for staff or volunteers - required to deliver this project?	
No	✓
Yes	

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Monitoring and Evaluation

Is there baseline data to describe what things were like before the start of the project?				
		No		
		Yes	✓	
The project knows which households are supported by the Welfare Rights team and therefore will know exactly which additional households the project has identified.				
Is the difference that the project is making measured or monitored by the host organisation?				
		Yes	✓	
		No		
Who within the host organisation is responsible for monitoring the impact of the project?				
Welfare Rights team and David Murdoch.				
How often is the impact of the project monitored or measured by the host organisation?				
Annually.				
What methods, techniques or strategies are used by the host organisation to impact of the project?				
Data related to engagement with the welfare rights team is monitored.				
What information is collected by the host organisation about the project?				
Number of users	Yes	✓	No	
Profile of users	Yes	✓	No	
Experience of users	Yes		No	✓
Outcomes for users	Yes	✓	No	
Anything else	Yes		No	

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Has the data that has been collected by the host organisation been used to adapt the way the project works?	
No	✓
Yes	
Has an external organisation been employed to formally evaluate the project?	
No	✓
Yes	
Is there an intention to employ an external organisation to evaluate the impact of the project in the future?	
Don't know / no current plans	N/A
No	N/A
Yes	N/A
Is there an intention to undertake your own formal evaluation in the future to estimate the impact of the project?	
Don't know / no current plans	✓
No	
Yes	

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Impact

To what extent have the aims of the project been achieved?		
Fully met		
Making progress toward meeting Aims		✓
Not making progress		
By evaluating third party data, the project is able to help other councils considering the same project by assessing if it was useful or not.		
What difference has the project made?		
It is too early to judge.		
Have conditions or demand changed since the project was introduced?		
No		
Yes		✓
Tackling child poverty is a renewed target of the UK Government. This change allowed the project to be more forward leaning with the data.		
Has the project had the capacity to meet these changing conditions and demand?		
Yes		✓
No		
Has the project changed through time?		
No		
Yes		✓
What changed	The project did not continue from evaluation to utilisation.	
Why has it changed	There were too many data quality issues from the third-party datasets.	
Has the project had any unexpected or unintended outcomes?		
No		
Yes		✓
One outcome was discovering there were issues with the data, such as it not being accurate or completely reliable.		

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In your opinion, is the project having an impact on tackling poverty?	
No	
Yes	✓
At the moment it hasn't but the project believes it will do.	

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Learning from Experience

What is working well?	
Milestones that were set at the start of the project have been met. The project has also already been able to get an understanding of how valuable and practical third-party datasets can be when tackling poverty.	
What, if anything, is working less well?	
There have been difficulties predicting the quality of the data, compared to more reliable datasets such as the Scottish Household Survey.	
What are the key learning points that you'd like to share with other practitioners?	
One key learning point is to always consider the accuracy of third-party data.	
Are there plans to develop or expand the project in the future?	
No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If the pilot is a success the project will be expanded to cover all Argyll and Bute schools.	
How easily do you think this project could be replicated in another setting?	
Fairly easily.	

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