

Nurses help fight child poverty in Scotland

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A project in Scotland to tackle child poverty led to more than £2.2 million in financial gains over 15 months and other positive outcomes for families, including improved child care and housing.

The Healthier, Wealthier Children project was established in response to high levels of child poverty in the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde area. The Scottish Government gave £1 million to fund development officers and advice workers to whom [healthcare staff](#) could refer families they believed were at risk.

An evaluation study reported in the journal *Primary Health Care* this month shows that over the first 15 months of the project there were more than 2,500 referrals, mostly from midwives and health visitors. (The figure has now risen to 4,800 referrals with £4.4 million in financial gains for families since October 2010).

Almost half of those families referred under the scheme benefitted financially through interventions such as savings from written-off debt, one-off payments from social fund awards or backdated benefits, or from receiving child-related or other benefits.

The authors of the report, from the Glasgow Centre for [Population Health](#), say that qualitative interviews with service users show improved quality of life.

'For some respondents, the project enabled essential improvements in their [home environment](#). For example, one respondent said: "I don't

worry how much heating I can put on... the best thing is heating when they come home from school."

They add: 'These results corroborate findings of previous research studies showing the potential financial and non-financial benefits of income maximisation services based in [healthcare settings](#) for "hard to reach" groups.'

The authors say the evaluation revealed that a significant number of families were unaware of their entitlements and unknown to money advice services, and they warn that while service users reported improved wellbeing 'it cannot be assumed that this type of intervention will fully alleviate future financial concerns'.

They conclude that: 'This system-wide study has added to the evidence base on the role that midwives and health visitors can play in developing an early intervention response to address [child poverty](#).'

More information: Naven, L. and Egan, J. (2013) Addressing child poverty in Scotland: the role of nurses, *Primary Health Care*. 23, 5, 16-22.

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