

# SCOTTISH ANTI POVERTY REVIEW



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## LOCAL APPROACHES TO TACKLING POVERTY





## EDITORIAL TEAM

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## DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in the Scottish Anti Poverty Review do not necessarily reflect those of The Poverty Alliance.

## ABOUT THE POVERTY ALLIANCE

The Poverty Alliance is a network of community, voluntary, statutory and other organisations whose vision is of a sustainable Scotland based on social and economic justice, with dignity for all, where poverty and inequalities are not tolerated and are challenged.

Our aim is to combat poverty by working with others to empower individuals and communities to affect change in the distribution of power and resources. To do this we:

- Work with people and communities experiencing poverty to empower them to address poverty
- Work with organisations to build a strong anti-poverty network in Scotland
- Support the development of policies which promote social justice and combat poverty
- Raise awareness about poverty and encourage debate

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# WELCOME

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## EDITORIAL

### Local Solutions

It is often said that 'all politics is local'. Whilst we spend much of our time debating the big 'global' political issues – Brexit or Scottish independence for example – what really matters to people is the things that affect them in their daily lives. Of course, there is more than a hint of condescension in the idea that all politics is local, as it seems to suggest that 'ordinary' people are not really concerned with the big global issues, which, of course, we are. But there is definitely truth in the idea that what matters is what affects people on a day to day basis. It's why issues like clean streets and trains that run on time are so important – these are the things people deal with day in and out.

Can the same be said of poverty? Is all poverty local? It is certainly experienced very much at an individual or family level. The nature of poverty is that it breaks down bonds of solidarity between individuals and within communities. In that sense, poverty is local. It can only be experienced at the local level. However, when we look for solutions to poverty we often tend to look 'upwards', to national level approaches. This is not surprising. If we want rights based approaches, to set a floor to incomes below which no one should fall, then we need national level approaches.

Over the last seven years we have started to see some of these national level solutions falter. The UK Government focus on austerity has seen wave after wave of punitive cuts to the social security system, whether in relation to the level of welfare benefits or the entitlement to them. It is not surprising that in this context there has been a flourishing of local approaches to addressing poverty. As Jim McCormick of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation highlights, more than 30 local fairness commissions have been established across the UK, largely since 2010.

These Commissions, at least eight of which have been established in Scotland usually with local authorities in the lead but formally independent of them, have taken different forms and have developed a range of locally focused approaches to addressing poverty. Some have involved people with experience of poverty directly, others have been based on extensive programmes of research and community engagement. All of them have identified a wide range of issues that can be addressed at the local level. There are some common themes. Ensuring that there is decent access to benefits advice and support has been central. Given the centrality of benefit cuts and changes

to the system over the last few years, and in the years to come, this is not surprising.

There has also been a welcome focus on the Living Wage. In Renfrewshire and Dumfries and Galloway, the local authorities, provided leadership in becoming accredited and then encouraged employers in their area to do the same. As Martyn Evans highlights, in Fife the Fairer Fife Commission recommended that Fife become a Living Wage region, a proposal that is not being actively pursued. A number of local anti-poverty strategies, in Glasgow, Dundee and Dumfries and Galloway for example, have highlighted the need to address the stigma that people living on low incomes experience. This has been an issue that people that the Poverty Alliance works with have raised many times. That local authorities and others are taking up this issue and starting to design their service to ensure that people are treated with dignity and respect highlights the importance of the emergence of these local approaches to addressing poverty.

At a recent conference in Paisley to review the progress that had been made and the lessons learned since the Council launched their anti-poverty strategy, a delegate questioned the effectiveness of local anti-poverty strategies. Given the attack on social protections that has been consistently coming from the UK Government, were the efforts of local authorities and others merely mitigating the damage that was being done. The delegate finished by saying that the Scottish Government's hands, and by implication those of local authorities, were tied. Such a view is widely held, and perhaps there is some truth in it. However, the temptation to shift responsibility onto some other level of government should always be resisted.

Undoubtedly, many of the solutions to poverty lie at higher levels of Government. But they also lie outside government, with businesses and the voluntary sector. What all of the local approaches to tackling poverty have done is to help focus on what role we can all play to tackle poverty, no matter where we are, in government, civil society or business. And with more than 1 million people in Scotland now living in low income households, it is vital that we all take responsibility for finding better solutions to the poverty crisis that now grips our country.

Peter Kelly, Director, Poverty Alliance



## THIRD SECTOR COMMENT

### Local approaches to tackling poverty

*SCVO's director of public affairs, John Downie, writes about the work being done by the third sector to tackle poverty at a local level.*

In the battle against endemic and generational poverty the key issue for the third sector is a determination to shift the dimensions of the debate from 'the state knows best' to a rights-based, inclusive approach. Giving people more control over the key decisions that affect their lives and communities.

Many of SCVO's members fight for social and economic justice every day, from maximising incomes to campaigning for national policy change. Through their unique place at the heart of communities, charities and voluntary organisations are not just complimenting, but are leading the local fight against poverty. This leadership, combined with fresh ideas and inclusive decision making, are the vital components needed for tackling poverty at local level.

Poverty blights people's lives, harms health and well-being, and reduces life opportunities severely. Our members see, and hear of, this impact every day and this drives them to act. As well as lobbying for the key structural drivers of poverty to be addressed, our members are carrying out invaluable work at local level to make real differences to people's lives, from providing essentials, to promoting individual self-confidence and empowerment.

Poverty often leaves people feeling marginalised and ignored by society, in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges. By listening to, and working with, individuals and communities in poverty, our sector is often stepping in where public sector approaches have failed. By involving those with direct experience, our sector is developing inclusive and innovative responses to address specific local challenges of poverty.

This is evident, for example, in the Community Capacity and Resilience Fund (CCRF). Offering awards of up to £5,000, the fund is enabling vital frontline services to combat inequality and promote an inclusive and preventative agenda. Round 1 of the CCRF saw a range of creative approaches to mitigating welfare reform and transforming communities.

Round 2 started this year and will see 68 organisations supported to pioneer a wide range of initiatives. The Govanhill Community Baths Trust, for example, have identified a lack of inclusive services to address the dire local health and wellbeing statistics. Funding has now been allocated to develop a more strategic distribution of food and to tackle social isolation, through expanding both the food bank and the healthy eating cookery programme.

By piloting such approaches, the CCRF is representative on a micro level of the sectors place in tackling poverty nationally. The wider movement continues to be driven by civil society, with charities, voluntary organisations and social enterprises providing the leadership and example for public bodies to follow.

Co-production and more inclusive decision-making; valuing everyone's contribution to society; and addressing inequalities faced by women, people with disabilities and those who leave school with few qualifications, for example, are clear examples of third sector policy ideas which have now spread into public sector decision making.

There are many other examples which could be added to that list. Eradicating poverty is a generational battle which requires better directed funding, a stronger societal push, braver political leadership and fresher ideas. Pivotal to this will be the role of the third sector in leading new local approaches to tackling poverty.

#### About SCVO

SCVO has been championing the third sector in Scotland for over 70 years. We work in partnership with charities, social enterprises and voluntary organisations of all shapes and sizes to advance our shared values and interests, and to improve the lives of people across Scotland.



## RESEARCH COMMENT

# A little local knowledge need not be a dangerous thing

*In this column, John McKendrick highlights the importance of evidence and knowing how to interpret it.*

Although I don't share his sense of purpose, I do warm to some aspects of the philosophy of the American author of *Think and Grow Rich* (1937), the 20th Century 'self-help' book, of which more than twenty million copies have been sold. More specifically, Napoleon Hill does not accept Francis Bacon's belief that "knowledge is power", instead arguing that, "knowledge is only POTENTIAL power. It becomes power when, and if, it is organized into definite plans of action and directed to a definite end".

There are many drivers that make Hill's thinking pertinent to tackling poverty locally in Scotland at the current time. First, there is the platform of the now-established Community Empowerment Act of 2015, which among other concerns, gives communities the right to identify needs and issues and request action to be taken. More recently, the Child Poverty (Scotland) Bill was introduced to the Scottish Parliament on February 9th 2017, with section 10 requiring local authorities and health boards to produce a local child poverty action plan each year. Third, council elections in Scotland will be held on May 4th 2017, which will shape the local priorities for service and local welfare provision in the years ahead.

Fourth, notwithstanding the deal that was struck in early February 2017 to bolster local government funding, there are still concerns over the ability of local government to maintain service provision, which is, for example, threatening the position of local regeneration officers in some administrations. Finally, the release of the 2016 iteration of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation has provided the means to update our understanding of where the most intense concentrations of deprivation are to be found in Scotland. We have the tools and we have the knowledge to make a difference.

The potential of political tools to tackle local poverty will only be realised if we avail ourselves of the opportunities and we interpret the evidence critically. The rise to prominence of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation is particularly significant. Readily and freely accessible tools allow local areas to be profiled and ranked in terms of overall deprivation and the domains of which this is

comprised (income, employment, health, education, housing, geographical access and crime). With a postcode to hand, we can profile the area in which we live at the click of a button. These data need careful interpretation. For example, although this morning I found out that I live in one of Scotland's 10% Most Deprived Areas (S01011683), I know that the street on which I live with its detached bungalows and private driveways will contribute less to the area ranking than the one comprising post-war council built maisonettes that runs parallel to it.

Not only are there differences within areas of deprivation that should be acknowledged. It is also important to acknowledge that the overall character of areas of multiple deprivation vary markedly from place-to-place, which emphasises the importance of local knowledge. For example, there are significant differences in profile among the 5% Most Deprived Areas in Scotland, which would necessitate a different emphases in local deprivation strategies. For example, SIMD 2016 informs us that, among the 5% Most Deprived:

### *Percentage of people who are income deprived*

Ranges from 26% in part of Fallside, near Uddingston in North Lanarkshire (S01011533) to 73% in part of Niddrie in Edinburgh (S01008710)

### *Proportion of people aged 16-19 not in full time education, employment or training*

Ranges from 2% in S01010032 (Tradeston, immediately south of Glasgow city centre) to 48% in S01010230 (part of Royston to the north east of Glasgow city centre)

### *Percentage of people who are employment deprived*

17% in part of Linlathen in north Dundee ((S01007805) to 53% in part of Niddrie in east Edinburgh (S01008710)



## RESEARCH COMMENT

# A little local knowledge need not be a dangerous thing

### *Proportion of population being prescribed drugs for anxiety, depression or psychosis*

Ranges from 10% in S01010032 (Tradeston, immediately south of Glasgow city centre) to 43% in part of Possilpark in Glasgow (S01010323).

### *Proportion of live singleton births of low birth weight*

22 of Scotland's very most deprived datazones are reported to have no children born of low birth weight, compared to 31% in part of Ferguslie Park, Paisley (S01012068)

### *Percentage of people in households without central heating*

72 of Scotland's very most deprived datazones are reported to have no-one living in a house without central heating, whereas in three datazones in Wyndford in the city of Glasgow, the proportion of households without central heating ranges from 13% to 21%.

### *Percentage of people in households that are overcrowded*

Ranges from 5% in the largely rural area surrounding the village of Caldercruix in North Lanarkshire (S01011682) to 41% in central Govan (S01009844)

### *Recorded crimes of violence, sexual offences, domestic housebreaking, vandalism, drugs offences, and common assault per 10,000 people*

Ranges from 147 at the heart of Blackhill in Glasgow (S01010179) to 3890 in part of Greenock town centre (S01010891)

This final statistic is also suggestive of another role of local knowledge.

For many years, Blackhill in Glasgow was associated with the organised crime, being the home of Arthur Thompson and Paul Ferris, and was more recently associated with a convicted criminal, who the press dubbed the 'Blackhill Butcher'.

Without underestimating the problem of local crime, it is significant to note that the datazone at the heart of Blackhill has the lowest crime rate of all of Scotland's 5% Most Deprived Areas and a lower crime rate than more than 100 of Scotland's 5% Least Deprived Areas.

There is a need for local intelligence to better understand the nature of local deprivation and to challenge some of the misperceptions that persist.



## POLITICAL COMMENT

### Alison Johnstone

*Alison Johnstone MSP is Social Security spokesperson for the Scottish Greens. In this piece, she outlines the Scottish Green Party's priorities for tackling poverty.*

I was very proud last year to stand for election on a radical manifesto that put tackling poverty at its heart. That election resulted in a three-fold increase in the number of Green MSPs and even less than a year into the new session of Parliament, Greens can point to achievements in advancing the anti-poverty agenda.

The requirement in the Child Poverty Bill for Local Authorities and Health Boards to produce a local child poverty action report is very welcome but we need to do more to build anti-poverty capacity within Local Authorities and our NHS. Save the Children's report Local action to tackle child poverty in Scotland warned that, despite progress, only half of local authorities surveyed have examples of good practice in tackling child poverty, with even fewer able to point to evidence of impact, and there remains insufficient clarity about how child poverty is tackled locally. I have called for poverty reduction to be included in the review of NHS targets.

Local Authorities will be in a better position to tackle poverty because of Green action during the recent budget process. Throughout the budget negotiations, Greens called for an anti-poverty budget. Whilst we did not get everything we called for, such as a £5 top-up for Child Benefit, our constructive engagement with the Government resulted in us winning £160million for local priorities compared to the draft budget, the biggest budget concession in Holyrood's history. Even with this concession there is no doubt that reduced budgets are squeezing services.

The benefits system has become increasingly hostile to people who need to claim support, and I have been vocal in calling for a more accessible system. In September 2016, I persuaded the Cabinet Secretary for Health to commit to a national roll-out of Glasgow's Healthier Wealthier Children scheme. It trained health visitors to help vulnerable families access benefits, boosting their incomes on average by £1,000 a year. This approach should be part of a national income maximisation strategy, whereby everyone has the right to advice to help them claim benefits through the local services they access, whether that be

health or education, for example.

This approach of making benefits easier to access can be built into the new devolved benefits system. We can move away from a centralised benefits application process, and offer numerous ways in which people can apply. The new social security agency's staff could be co-located with local services and such services may also deliver front-line social security services on behalf of the national agency.

I am very pleased to see local governments in Fife and Glasgow planning to trial one of the Scottish Green Party's most long-standing policies – a Citizen's Income. I'm very much looking forward to the Scottish Parliament's Social Security Committee investigation into the idea. A Citizen's Income would make the benefits system simpler, reward unpaid domestic labour and caring, enable people who are over-worked to take more time off, and ensure everyone's basic needs are met. Finland is trialling it, as are cities in the Netherlands and the Canadian province of Ontario, and I am delighted to see the idea taking hold in Scotland.

The devolution of employability programmes is another exciting opportunity to tackle poverty locally. Thanks to Greens showing how it could be done, these programmes will be run on a voluntary basis only, and participants will not have their benefits sanctioned. In designing these programmes, the Scottish Government must understand the way that previous programmes have pushed people into low-paid work. There needs to be more of a focus on helping people into long-term, sustainable jobs that pay at least the Scottish Living Wage.

Last year Greens stood on a manifesto which offered a range of policies to tackle poverty. Less than a year into the new Parliament some of these have already been achieved, and I hope you can see we've started as we mean to go on.



# TACKLING POVERTY IN GLASGOW

## Gerry Quinn

*Gerry Quinn, from Glasgow's Poverty Leadership Panel gives an overview of the work being done to tackle poverty in the city.*



Glasgow is a thriving cosmopolitan city with a vision of being a world class city, focused on economic growth and tackling poverty and inequality. In recent times the city and the Council have received many accolades for business, sport and education, however there are still many challenges that face the city, in particular the section of our community that face hardship and poverty on a daily basis.

In 2012, the Fraser of Allander Institute reported that following welfare reform, Glasgow was one of the hardest hit cities with approximately a £115million reduction in social security benefits.

In response to these statistics, in May 2013, with the help of Rev Dr Martin Johnstone, Chair of Glasgow's 3rd Sector Forum, the city established the Poverty Leadership Panel (PLP) to help steer the development of a citywide anti-poverty strategy.

Further welfare reform has only exacerbated the issue in the city and a report by Sheffield Hallam University "The uneven impact of welfare reform - March 2016", estimated that there will be a total reduction in Glasgow of £348 million per year by 2020/21.

The PLP is made up of many of the city's key public sector decision makers, representatives from the 3rd sector and, most importantly, volunteers who have lived experience

of poverty, the Community Activist Panel (CAP). The PLP holds quarterly events and they are co-chaired by a member of the CAP and the Leader of the Council.

The PLP partners agreed to have a thematic approach to the tackling poverty work, with a CAP member in each workstream to inform and assist in research and development of the PLP's work. There are 9 workstreams in the PLP, and the aims of the workstreams are:

### **Attitudes**

When our CAP members told us that negative attitudes towards them because they were on benefits or in poverty from their fellow citizens was as bad as having no money or job, we worked with them to co-develop an anti-stigma training and awareness module for public sector staff. Our aim is to change the mind set of those people who have negative attitudes towards our most vulnerable citizens, by making them aware that poverty is not a chosen lifestyle, the myths behind the poverty headlines, and the effect their negative attitudes have on their fellow Glaswegians. A second phase of this anti-stigma awareness raising will be launched late February 2017 via Social Media, highlighting a different theme every month.

### **Child Poverty**

Glasgow has the highest number of children living in poverty in Scotland and we will take action to reduce this number, as well as to maximise families' disposable incomes.

### **Credit & Debt**

We want to ensure that our most vulnerable citizens have access to affordable credit and bank accounts. This will ensure they are not financial excluded, which is both a symptom and a cause of poverty.

### **Participation**

We aspire to have every citizen of Glasgow involved





# TACKLING POVERTY IN GLASGOW

in shaping and making decisions about the places and services that affect their lives and Glasgow's future.

## *Work & Worth*

We want to ensure that paid work provides a wage sufficient to enable an adequate standard of living in Glasgow and volunteering is promoted as having value in itself and the barriers to participation are removed.

## *Welfare Reform*

We want to mitigate the effect of welfare reforms for those living in poverty by ensuring that they receive the benefit they're entitled to and have access to advice to know their rights.

## *Housing*

We want to ensure that local people are routinely and meaningfully involved in local housing issues and structures in Glasgow; and are better able to advocate for themselves and others about their housing needs.

## *Food Poverty*

We want to co-ordinate the approach to food poverty and food insecurity across the city, to ensure that there is a long term sustainable alternative to foodbanks. The issues of food allergies and food cultures should also be taken into account when we take this Workstream forward. There is an ever growing need for healthy, nutritious and affordable food. Foodbanks, other emergency food outlets and food insecurity should not be seen as a way to address food poverty. We are working with a range of partner organisations to develop an alternative to the current options that we believe will be sustainable and will remove the stigma of relying on foodbanks or worse going without food.

## *Fuel Poverty*

We want to increase the energy efficiency of the housing stock across all tenures in the city and mitigate the impact of rising energy costs on vulnerable households. In Glasgow there are approximately 103,000 households spending more than 10% of their disposable household income on fuel, this effects around 34% of Glasgow's households and over 8,000 households are experiencing extreme Fuel Poverty. Our aim is to ensure Glasgow maximises funding opportunities to tackle fuel poverty in domestic households. Each workstream has an action plan and progress against actions is reported to the PLP Governance panel, chaired by the Council's Chief Executive and is reported to the PLP partners at our quarterly event. We are developing a more streamlined monitoring and reporting structure with colleagues at the Glasgow Centre for Population and Health (GCPH).



The PLP has also delivered a number of other service improvements, products and research reports developed with members of the CAP, these include:

- The Mutual Mentoring Scheme where 6 public sector decision makers met up on 6 occasions with 6 volunteers with experience of poverty to get awareness of each other's circumstances and for the decision makers to take the poverty awareness back to their workplace and use the experience to influence decisions. Phase 2 of this scheme is underway with private and public sector decision makers involved.



## TACKLING POVERTY IN GLASGOW

- Following the Cost of the School Day report where it was highlighted that “Uniform is the cheapest option and helps to equalise pupils, but clothing still the key indicator of income for children and first thing to be picked on”, we used our data to identify those families who had not applied for the free school clothing grant. The data showed that almost 6,000 children were not getting the grant that they were entitled to. We also identified that the value of the grant had not changed in years and requested that the council increase the value. This resulted in a rise of £5 per grant. Almost 6,000 grants were issued automatically to those families who hadn’t applied and the £5 increase was issued to the families of the 20,000 children who were already in receipt.

- All in for Parkhead is a community driven project where derelict land has been handed over to the local community who have cleared the rubbish and litter from it and turned it into a place for local children to grow vegetables and meet as a community. The local community have also built up its after school homework club where pupils and parents get together to do homework, share cooking of meals and eat together.

- In October 2016 we launched, a Citywide All Age Strategy for tackling poverty in the City, known as the People Make Glasgow Fairer Strategy. This was developed with the help of CAP members and other PLP partners and therefore represents the needs of our most vulnerable citizens. The Strategy was agreed and signed off by the PLP and later by the City Council’s Elected Members at the Executive Committee meeting.

- All in for Priesthill is also a community lead project where local residents have worked together with the PLP and other services to refurbish flats that were in a state of disrepair, the area was infested with vermin and a general lack of security and safety was causing a lot of anxiety and health issues in the area. The project has received over £5million in funding to help regenerate the area.

- The Wee Glasgow Loan is an alternative to the high street high interest payday lender. It was established following research in Glasgow that stated that approximately 100,000 high interest loans are taken out by our citizens every year with a value of around £57million. This loan is set at 2% interest per month and if taken over a year to allow the customer to qualify the interest would be 26% APR. This a partnership project between the Council and Pollok and BCD Credit Unions.

- We continue to ensure that our citizens receive the benefits that they are entitled to through our network of advisors and benefit take up campaigns.

- We identified that there are great opportunities to help local projects and poverty through the community benefits linked to the Council’s procurement process and look to increasing these opportunities by building a closer working relationship with all relevant stakeholders.

There are many other pieces of discreet work that have been completed since the PLP first started and we’ve identified many more areas that we need to invest our limited resources in.

### *In-Work Support*

Getting a job used to mean that you were out of poverty, however the level of low paid jobs in the city means that 55% of people where one adult in the household is working are regarded as living in poverty. At an employment event in Glasgow, citizens told us that when they started work after being in receipt of benefits that they felt there was insufficient information on the services available to them and they also felt isolated. The PLP is developing Glasgow’s In-Work Support that will provide guidance on the benefits and services that people who start work or are in low paid employment can continue to receive, as well as information on how to get training and set up a savings account. This information will be held in a booklet as well as being online at [www.glasgow.gov.uk/iws](http://www.glasgow.gov.uk/iws)



## TACKLING POVERTY IN GLASGOW

### *Free Phone to DWP*

The PLP was told that phoning DWP to make a claim for Universal Credit (UC) can be a lengthy and costly call, and on more than a few occasions the citizen's mobile phone credit ran out. We are piloting a free phone service to DWP for UC claims in 2 of the city's libraries.

### *Homelessness*

The PLP was made aware that homeless people who failed to advise the Jobcentre that they were homeless were automatically placed on Universal credit, meaning that the person would not have the "Homeless Easement Indicator" marked on their claim. This indicator means the person does not have to be actively seeking work or available for work that will significantly reduce the risk of sanctions due to their often chaotic lifestyles. Our research found that a high number of homeless people were completely unaware of this issue until it was too late. Along with DWP and other stakeholders the PLP will be raising awareness of this issue through a citywide publicity campaign, targeting homeless accommodations. The strength of the PLP is listening to our community, our strong partnership working and our determination to tackle poverty and make a difference to the citizens of our City.

The PLP's vision is that:

"Poverty is made a thing of the past. We want all of us across Glasgow to contribute to significantly reducing poverty and exclusion over the next decade, by acting now we want Glasgow to be a place where everyone agrees that poverty is an outrage, and where every person feels that they can be a part of Glasgow"

For more information on the PLP go to [www.povertyleadershippanel.org.uk](http://www.povertyleadershippanel.org.uk)



*Florence O'Hale from the PLP's Community Activist Panel wins the Community Giants Award for her volunteering work.*



## PROMISING BUT NOT YET PROVEN?

### The role of local fairness commissions

*Jim McCormick is Associate Director Scotland with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and currently advising Perth & Kinross Fairness Commission. Here he gives an overview of the work being done by local fairness commissions.*

At least eight local commissions have sprung up in Scotland and more than 30 across Britain to identify how to tackle poverty or wider inequalities, using local powers and resources. They have different names, degrees of independence and influence. As shorthand, I'll refer to fairness commissions here, but in each case referred to in Scotland reducing various aspects of poverty has been a core part of the purpose.

The root causes of poverty and inequality are multiple, arising from economic and social choices made (or not made) at many levels. The locality is far from the most powerful site of decision-making in this respect. Yet, how resources are galvanised at the local level can make its own important dent in poverty. To borrow North Ayrshire's typology, local actions can help to prevent, mitigate or undo disadvantage. What can't be decided locally might still be influenced by relationship-building and advocacy work, looking outwards and upwards. Based on involvement and observation of various approaches in Scotland, ten propositions on fairness commissions follow:

1. First, learn from others: an overview by the New Economics Foundation offers important insights on what's more or less effective - clear principles which have a chance of enduring over time and recommendations that are specific and measurable are more likely to have an impact e.g. 'halve the share of the workforce paid less than the living wage' rather than 'tackle low pay' or 'reduce inequality.' Broad declarations of standing against poverty and for social justice will probably not lead to change.

2. Account for the different drivers of poverty: the framework developed for Scotland's Child Poverty strategy spanning pockets, prospects, places and participation is as good as any. It maintains a focus, simultaneously, on boosting incomes and reducing costs; improving life chances through learning and skills; paying attention to the quality of housing, environment and connectivity of the places we live in; and ensuring we keep a consistent focus on the lived experience of poverty - and ideally what helps to avoid it and escape it.

3. Build influence along the way: models of commission membership vary from wholly local individuals to mainly external participants, chosen for their influencing capacity at a wider level. Sometimes they will seek to blend people with experience of poverty and people with decision-making power. Either way, it is essential to involve local anchor institutions which have considerable scope to extend fairness. Across the local authority and NHS, other community planning partners, universities and colleges, housing associations and other major employers - especially place-based ones - very large revenue and procurement budgets flow. Ear-marking even a small proportion of these budgets to increase employment with training paid at living wage for low-participation groups, to pay for discounted travel and to generate additional community benefits will add up to a decent fund to extend fairness.

4. Take a broad and deep approach to expertise: this includes the skill of seeking out lesser heard voices, understanding lived experience and reflecting this in practical ideas for change. The Community Activists Panel (CAP - formerly the Wee Panel) has become integral to the Poverty Leadership Panel in Glasgow which is unusual for being a multi-annual rather than time-limited process. It provides volunteering opportunities for people with direct experience of poverty to help set priorities in the city. In Renfrewshire, partnering with The Star Project as a trusted gateway to hear the voices of people in poverty enabled commission members to hear difficult and sensitive stories of people's daily struggles against stigma as much as financial hardship. This went beyond the kind of feedback usually gleaned from outreach visits or larger events. Specific and granular perspectives were heard on the importance of interactions with frontline staff (especially health services, schools and advice lines). In the Fairer Fife Commission, participants heard from a group of women in their late 50s who felt cut adrift due to changes in the pension age. Facing ill health and with few qualifications, they felt daunted by tougher conditionality rules in the benefits system.



## PROMISING BUT NOT YET PROVEN?

5. Go with the grain of emerging opportunities: despite the tough outlook for public finances, substantial new investment in Scotland is ear-marked for affordable housing, early learning and childcare, the attainment challenge and apprenticeships, as well as city-region growth deals. In each case, as with ongoing budget decisions, the contribution to reducing poverty in the here-and-now as well as in future needs to be mapped out much more clearly.

6. Use good data: the fairness commission process often begins with a review of baseline indicators and actions: how is this area faring on child poverty, employment, levels of pay, skills, housing standards, attainment, viewed through the lens of equalities? It may also explore local consultation and research findings. The process turns infrequently towards evaluation of local approaches to reducing poverty or inequality. That may be for the legitimate reason that there just isn't enough by way of good quality evaluation. It can be costly. Working out attribution between local choices and outcomes is like chasing shadows. But that doesn't explain the patchy demand to know more about what works, for whom, where and why (some of which can be gleaned from other places and programmes). Gauging effectiveness and value for money – above all in times of cuts – should not be regarded as discretionary elements. Nor can the complexity of knowing what works stand as a reasonable defence. Although we can't know the precise contribution of each spending decision, we can delve into those areas we believe to have the greatest potential in order to gauge impacts. How many people were beneficiaries? What difference has been made? What's the scope to increase take-up? Can we invest more in supporting people and less on the process?

The Fairer Fife Commission took a data-rich approach aiming for Fife to be among the five best authorities in Scotland on various measures – helpfully quantifying how many more people in Fife would need to have adequate incomes, gain qualifications and participate as voters and volunteers for example.

7. Evaluate and advocate: much of what is being done – or proposed – on the strength of fairness commissions in Scotland falls into the category of 'promising' rather than 'proven'. We can infer from wider research and evaluation evidence which local actions are likely to make a net positive difference – i.e. to have a clear impact on poverty that would not occur otherwise. For example:

- The Families First programme (Renfrewshire) extends support during school holidays with play, learning and lunch included. A successful evaluation has led to its expansion into additional areas. It is part of a trend towards mapping and reducing costs of the school day and holiday times, influenced originally by work in the North-East of England and now evident in Dundee, Glasgow and North Ayrshire among others.
- Other approaches to boosting incomes or cutting costs include automatic payment of school clothing grants in Glasgow to families receiving other income-based support (housing benefit and/or council tax reduction) – in effect boosting take-up for a cash payment among families that didn't know they were eligible.
- Carnegie UK Trust is convening plans to establish new community development finance initiatives (CDFIs) in order to increase access to affordable credit. Fife is home to CUKT, a strength in terms of advocacy and policy influence as well as local investment. The Wee Glasgow Loan offers small loans via a local credit union to people who may not yet have established a savings record.
- The Fairer Fife Commission endorsed the idea of testing basic or citizens income in one town, inspired by a long-established body of research and advocacy and pilots planned or in train elsewhere including Finland. While running such a pilot will be a major stretch – needing substantial resourcing and flexibility in the GB benefits system – the recommendation has sparked similar interest in Glasgow and generated new sources of activism and expertise in Fife.



## PROMISING BUT NOT YET PROVEN?

- While many actions involving income maximisation or cost reduction ('pockets'), improving opportunities can attend to longer-term prospects. In Renfrewshire, reducing the attainment gap emerged as a strong local priority ahead of the national attainment challenge. A programme to strengthen literacy teaching in all primary schools, with expert input and evaluation support from Strathclyde University, became the single biggest item of new investment on the back of Renfrewshire's commission report. A fund to help schools reduce costs facing low-income families was also established.
  - In a different example, Volunteer Glasgow has worked consistently with regional DWP managers to clarify the rules on permitted volunteering for people claiming out-of-work benefits. One of the targets for the city's Poverty Leadership Panel is to remove barriers to volunteering for people and places with the lowest levels of participation.
8. Put cultural change at the heart of the process: people in poverty often talk about stigma and shame when describing how they have felt when using services. Many have felt judged for the way they speak, the clothes they wear or the street they live in. While changing public attitudes is a long-term task for society, improving workforce knowledge, attitudes and respectful interactions with disadvantaged people is a commitment that all public services can make. Some places – notably Glasgow and Sheffield – have maintained this focus.
9. Mind the gap: there are some common omissions and weaknesses across fairness commissions. Meaningful participation of private sector employers is notably absent. The best driver for their involvement is to identify the business case rather than corporate social responsibility. For example, commissions might seek out employers in local growth sectors where there is a clear stake in raising productivity, reducing turnover of staff, increasing return on investment in skills and forging closer links with schools. Under the banner of inclusive growth, the rise of city-region growth deals in six parts of Scotland plus

the Ayrshire Growth Deal creates new opportunities to pursue employment that drives down poverty. But we can safely bet that 'fair work' won't happen by itself. This will come down to the nitty gritty of funding conditions, procurement and community benefit clauses, as well as developing know-how.

Business also provides key goods and services like energy, banking, insurance and credit. Private landlords deliver a growing share of housing. High costs are a major driver of poverty. While powers to regulate sit well beyond the scope of localities, fairness commissions can work with the private sector to propose higher standards, help low-income consumers to get a better deal from the market, ensure consumer redress and support social enterprises which aim to do the job better.

10. Last, pay attention to local politics. Tackling poverty probably isn't a partisan issue in a way that reducing inequality probably still is. But commissions to date have often failed to build bridges with opposition councillors. We would be better served if each kind of administration after local elections in May commits to reducing poverty. We don't need a fairness commission in all areas – but we do need the lessons learned to be adapted to local context and applied throughout Scotland.

JRF's strategy to Solve UK Poverty is available at [www.jrf.org.uk](http://www.jrf.org.uk)



## SOUTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

# Our Approach to Tackling Poverty

*Kay McIntosh, Tackling Poverty Team Manager, gives an overview of the work being done in South Lanarkshire to tackle poverty.*

Poverty sadly impacts on around a fifth of residents in South Lanarkshire. The council area is home to more than 311,000 people and is one of the most diverse areas of the country with a large urban and rural mix stretching from the outskirts of Glasgow to the Scottish Borders.

Levels of deprivation are highest in our urban communities and although many of the challenges faced by people are the same regardless of where they live, in rural communities access to services and transport may impact on life choices and opportunities.

As is the case nationally, the impacts of Welfare Reform and rise in in-work poverty levels are significant and have brought a new set of challenges not only to residents but to our council and local partners.

We firmly believe that to make a difference we cannot work in isolation. Our Community Planning structures in South Lanarkshire are key and include a Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Partnership Board providing the council and partners with direction.

These are expressed as key priority outcomes within our Local Improvement Plan (soon to become our LOIP) accompanied by the actions we and partners are taking and are available to view.

This article aims to provide a sense of the direction we are taking and a flavour of the work underway and planned.

It does not include the important work our nurseries and schools are taking forward to support early child development, raise attainment and close the attainment gap which would warrant a full article in its own right. Nor does it reflect all of the work ongoing across our five council resources which are contributing to reducing poverty.

With over one in five of our children now experiencing poverty and more than double that in some communities, the Board sees reducing the levels and impact of child poverty as one of our main priorities.

Maximising household income is key, and we can make a real difference at a local level. Early intervention is crucial and we are maximising the number of low income pregnant mums accessing financial wellbeing support through our Money Matters service, via referrals from midwives.

Helping families to access all the benefits and entitlements due as well as providing support and advice linked to debt or budgeting brings financial as well as other benefits.

The work has been so successful in increasing access that the multi agency team were finalists at the recent Scottish Improvement Awards.

We are now expanding efforts to include families with young children via referrals from health visitors. Our work has also been replicated across many other areas in Scotland and we are proud to be at the forefront of this important work.

In terms of maximising incomes, South Lanarkshire Council is proud to be a Living Wage Accredited employer and we were one of the first councils to introduce the Living Wage in 2011. Our Living wage rate continues to be above the Living Wage Foundation rate.

Given we are largest employer in the area the impact of this is significant and we don't want to stop there

The Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Partnership Board established a Living Wage Campaign Steering group several years ago and we continue to promote the Living Wage to local employers across all sectors

We have been working with Poverty Alliance staff to increase awareness and understanding of in work poverty across local staff in the council and in partner agencies who engage with employers.



## SOUTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

The purpose here is to send a consistent message to employers about the measures they can take to tackle in work poverty including paying the Living Wage.

A total of 17.4% of South Lanarkshire employees earn below the Living Wage compared to 19.5% across Scotland and we will keep working to reduce this figure.

We know from the uptake at food banks that working families and individuals are struggling to feed themselves so the more we can do to increase earning potential and find sustainable solutions the better.

One of our employability programmes offers support to low waged workers, typically in the hospitality and care sectors to up skill and gain workplace qualifications to help them progress.

With the roll out of Universal Credit and increasing in work poverty this effort is becoming increasingly important, representing a shift in delivery from solely focussing on supporting residents to move into work.

However, the majority of individuals that continue to be supported via our South Lanarkshire Works4U Employability programme are unemployed.

Last year more than 3000 residents took part in our SLWorks4U programme with almost a half progressing into employment and 87% experiencing a positive outcome. The programme focuses on supporting young people and others with multiple or complex barriers to work.

Providing wage subsidies to employers willing to create additional opportunities for young people or older workers has helped contribute to the very high outcome rate.

We have also worked with partners to deliver specific holistic support to lone parents to help them progress towards employment.

Much of our work is in part supported by external funding from Europe and elsewhere such as the Lottery.

It is a challenge to maintain the level of funding required and we are obviously concerned about the implications of Brexit and more generally its potential impact on our local economy as well as workers rights.



Our involvement in City Deal will also contribute to tackling poverty in South Lanarkshire in particular in terms of the employment opportunities it is and will bring to the area. We are encouraged by the fact that the procurement process aligned to City Deal includes Fair Work clauses which are to be passed on through main contractors to their supply chain. It is anticipated the infrastructure developments and the Gross Value Added from this investment will contribute significantly to the growth in jobs and prosperity in the region.

Residents experiencing poverty are joined by local agencies on the Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Board to ensure that our priorities and approaches reflect the needs of local individuals and communities affected by poverty.

Wherever possible residents are involved in the design and delivery of services and projects. We recognise that this is critical work and go beyond relying solely on these few individuals.

Instead we support community capacity building activity in a number of communities where the levels of poverty and deprivation far exceed the South Lanarkshire level.

Through this work, the community board members are able to share the experiences and views of many more.





## SOUTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

The capacity building work is proving to be successful in supporting local residents to use the assets they have to tackle local issues. One example of a successful project is a community led hub developed by the people of Hillhouse in Hamilton.

This is based in one of our own community facilities where local residents are supporting others to go online for benefit application and job search purposes and to take advantage of money saving opportunities.

They have expanded services to include a local food coop and community cafe and are now applying to a range of funders to build on their efforts.

Many of the local volunteers have progressed into work as a result and the local capacity building staff from our partner organisation Community Links and the local group are faced with the challenge of ensuring there are others available to step in and keep up the good work.

We have recently provided funding to enable these communities to test Participatory Budgeting approaches which over the course of two programmes have engaged over 1,100 residents in decision making days.

Funding has been given to 54 projects benefitting children and young people and more generally supporting community involvement across all age groups.

One of the projects supported is a breakfast club which members of the community of Burnhill in Rutherglen and local council youth work staff have developed.

This will provide primary and secondary children with a healthy breakfast working with the local business sector such as Greggs. The club, based in the local Universal Connections youth facility is run by local volunteer parents, who have gained food handling and hygiene certificated training, supported by the youth work staff.

Reducing fuel poverty is another key priority for the council and partners. A multi agency Fuel Poverty group

was established, again linked to our Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Board to ensure a joined up approach to the issues and to maximise the resources available and impact from them.

The group has established a single referral point for fuel poverty support, the Home Energy Scotland help line and worked with the delivery organisation to ensure that any local supports available are linked.

This ensures residents are able to access all available and appropriate local and national resources and assistance. Before this, referral partners struggled to understand where to refer residents to for help.

We have also been coordinating fuel poverty awareness training for front line staff in the council, NHS and others to enable them to identify households needing support.

Taking a more holistic approach is critical, where staff engaging with potentially vulnerable individuals and families consider more than the specific needs their service provides.

Currently 30% of residents in South Lanarkshire are affected by fuel poverty which although high is reducing.

In working towards our target of 100% of eligible housing stock in the social rented sector meeting the Energy Efficiency Standard by 2020, we have reached 85% so far.

As we make improvements in homes to reduce energy use, householders will get advice to help them understand how to make the best use of new equipment and improvements to keep fuel bills down and their homes warm.

Over the years our focus has shifted from funding projects to thinking more about how mainstream services work.

It is vital to ensure they are contributing to reducing poverty levels and impact and to reducing local inequalities.



## SOUTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

This will become an increasing priority; including considering the unique needs of individual communities blighted by poverty and deprivation and how we work together to meet these needs and improve life choices and chances.

As a council, we took the decision in 2011 to maintain a discreet Tackling Poverty budget and programme when the Scottish Government removed ring fenced funding.

This supports a range of interventions delivered by the council and local partners including youth diversion work; support to those at risk of homelessness; financial wellbeing support; early intervention work in schools and nurseries and our community capacity building work.

However the pressures on our council budget are so significant that we have had to make tough decisions about the amount of funding available.



We are aware of significant external funds that can support anti poverty work and our External Funding team working alongside our Third sector contacts VASLAN offer support across all council resources and partner organisations to raise awareness of these funds and support applications.

Most staff in our own and partner organisations have a very good understanding of poverty, there are still some who don't fully appreciate the reasons why residents are affected by poverty and how it impacts on them, their families and communities. In turn this can impact on

how we design and deliver services and how we engage with residents.

Over the last two years we have worked with the Poverty Alliance and other local partners, via a Challenging Stigma sub group of the Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Partnership Board to develop and progress a number of actions.

One of the first actions for South Lanarkshire Council was to sign the Stick Your Label Pledges and to encourage others to do the same.

This has been followed by daily emails during Challenge Poverty Week where we aim to bust some of the myths about poverty and the welfare state perpetuated by the tabloid press, at the same time providing data and information to ensure a basic level of knowledge.

We shared the materials with our partners and a survey highlighted that of those responding 55% felt they had a better understanding of the stigma of poverty; 31% felt inspired to do something different as a result of the campaign and 23% said they would treat people differently based on what they had learned.

The next phase of the work is the development of more formal training material which will be available via our online training portal.

Tackling Poverty and inequalities will continue to be a key priority for South Lanarkshire Council and we will continue to work with our partners to focus our efforts and resources where we think we will be able to make the most difference locally.



## OPTIMISM & CHANGE

### Martyn Evans

*In this article, Martyn Evans, Chief Executive of the Carnegie Trust, outlines the importance of taking a strategic approach to tackling poverty.*



Local approaches to resolving poverty are more likely to succeed if they are embedded within a wider strategic context. I chaired the Fairer Fife Commission which attempted to set out a progressive, inclusive and ambitious framework for action over a 15 year period. It identified the major UK, Scottish and local authority policy levers which affected fairness and poverty. The Commission debated the extent to which local decision makers are able to impact of macro-level policies (economic strategy, tax and benefits for example) on their citizens. We concluded that all the evidence pointed to an optimistic view.



We also took the 15 year view to emphasise the amount of human and financial resources available to local public agencies in Fife. We pointed out that Fife Council alone will spend upward of £15billion (£15,000,000,000) and 230,000 years of staff time over the period. Not an insignificant amount of people-time and money! We must expect real impact coming from that level of input.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation published an even wider strategic document *We Can Solve Poverty in the UK*. It also deserves careful reading by all those with ambitions to tackle poverty at a local level.

When I read this sentence ‘Solving poverty is good business’ in the Joseph Rowntree Foundation report *We Can Solve Poverty in the UK* I knew we were moving beyond safe territory and into far more radical and uncomfortable advocacy. This is not a report designed to make any of us feel complacent. It is addressed directly at ‘us’ as parents, neighbours, citizens and consumers. It is addressed to those in poverty (‘taking up reasonable offers of work’) as well as government and service providers. It speaks to philanthropic foundations as well, asking us to commit resources to tackling the underlying causes of poverty.



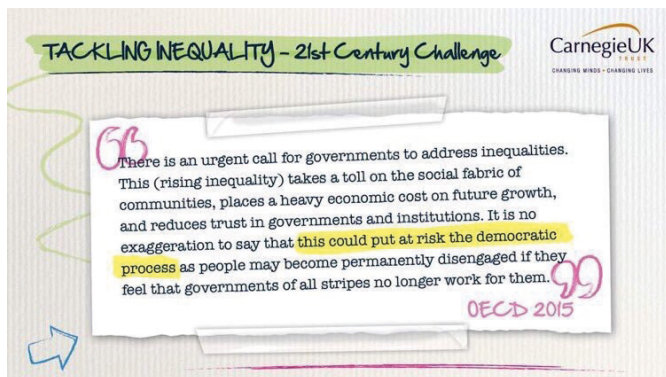
Launched last year, the strategy is a powerful call to action for government, business, communities and individuals to work together to find solutions to UK poverty. At its core is a refreshing optimism that poverty is solvable. But we need to work together with greater intensity to identify practical solutions. The strategy is a deeply impressive culmination of the work that the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has been doing for four years to identify and alleviate the roots causes of poverty. It has at its heart a call to align greater citizens and corporate responsibility alongside an active, enabling state.



# OPTIMISM & CHANGE

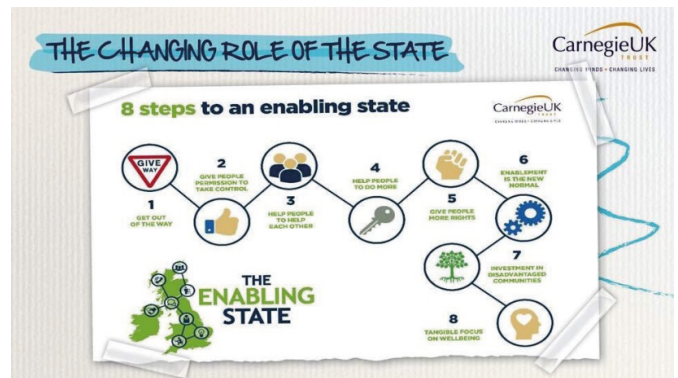
Our society has come a long way since the times that Andrew Carnegie and Joseph Rowntree lived in. We have built an impressive and complex welfare state. Opportunities have been made available to us that only three or four generation ago would have been unthinkable. Our general health and wellbeing has never been higher. However poverty is still with us- and its extent is unacceptable. It is 'shameful' in the words of JRF.

An estimated 13 million people in the UK are struggling to make ends meet, and approximately half of these live in a working household. Child poverty remains a particularly serious concern, which can have highly negative consequences for the emotional and physical health and life chances of children in this country, and can perpetuate the blight of generational poverty. Here lies the seeds of structural inequality in society. And as it has, rather surprisingly, taken the rich countries club the OECD to point out that inequality is an economic and democratic issue as well as a moral one.



Like the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, we believe that governments, civil society, funders and business have to work together and trust each other if meaningful and sustainable social change is to happen. Our own work has shown us that creativity and political will is most effectively generated by bringing people into contact with others from different backgrounds and perspectives. In addition to building support for this vision across the political spectrum, JRF's strategy envisages businesses catalysed to act as a force for good in communities where

they create jobs. Solving poverty is in everyone's best interests. The report estimates the UK already spends an extraordinary £78bn of public spending dealing with just the consequences of poverty. Given that level of current spend of course we can afford to solve poverty but it will take working with unusual friends!



We Can Solve Poverty in the UK sets out a pragmatic, optimistic and ambitious UK strategy, there are local strategies similar to the Fairer Fife Commission. Both set clear, meaningful outcomes and demonstrates how governments, businesses, communities and individuals can rise to the challenge. They deserve to be on the reading list of everyone interested in a prosperous and fulfilling society for their family, their neighbourhood and their society. It should then be the blueprint for action.



## POVERTY ALLIANCE COMMENT

Local authorities have control of important levers to tackle poverty, and in recent months we have seen more and more councils taking up the anti-poverty agenda. Glasgow, North Lanarkshire, Fife, Renfrewshire, Dumfries and Galloway and others have all undertaken a substantial amount of work in this area and we hope that in the coming months other local authorities will do the same.

In Glasgow the council, alongside partners, has developed a city-wide strategy for tackling poverty. This was developed alongside people with direct experience of poverty, and this participatory model gives the strategy a greater chance of succeeding. People with lived experience of poverty are the experts and they must be involved in the design and delivery of the services that affect them. The Poverty Alliance would like to see more local authorities commit to developing local anti-poverty strategies alongside people with direct experience in the coming year.

The Poverty Alliance will be working with people experiencing poverty over the coming weeks to develop our own series of asks for the local government elections. Local authorities are responsible for the delivery of many frontline services which people on low incomes rely on, and yet often local authority elections are seen as being less important – with turnout in 2012 coming in at less than 40 percent.

Key areas of concern for our members include the universal provision of free breakfast clubs, a Scottish Welfare Fund that operates in line with the principles of dignity and respect, and high quality well paid jobs. Local authorities must make these priority areas for the year ahead. Too often we think of the solutions to poverty solely in reference to social security but services play an important role too.

By investing in high quality, flexible childcare local authorities can make significant in-roads in tackling child poverty, and assisting women back into the labour market. By improving awareness of the Scottish Welfare Fund, local authorities can ensure people are able to access the support they are entitled to instead of having

to go to foodbanks to feed themselves and their families. By becoming accredited Living Wage employers, local authorities can ensure that even contracted out staff are paid a fair days pay for a fair days work.

Local authorities can also make a difference by poverty proofing their budgets. This would ensure that when tough financial decisions are being taken that people on the lowest incomes are not further disadvantaged. It should not be up to the poorest in our society to pay the price of cuts.

Local authorities must work with the private and third sectors to work towards tackling poverty. We all have a contribution to make and this starts by turning out to vote on 4 May. Make sure your voice is heard.



## GIVE ME FIVE

# The campaign to top-up child benefit in Scotland

*Hanna McCulloch, policy and parliamentary officer at CPAG Scotland, outlines the case for a £5 top up of child benefit.*

In the last few weeks official figures have shown that rates of child poverty in Scotland have leapt from 1 in 5 to 1 in 4.

Despite receiving very little media attention, the figures are big news for the 260,000 children now classed as living in poverty in Scotland - many of whom will have their prospects and hopes for the future dashed by a lack of the basic resources their friends and classmates take for granted.

Worse still, these latest figures could be just the tip of the iceberg. The Resolution Foundation has forecast that by 2020 the number of children living in poverty in the UK will have doubled compared to 2010. And while a lack of good quality, decently-paid jobs is key cause of child poverty the key factors driving up poverty are dramatic cuts to the UK social security system.

UK government policies such as the decision to freeze the value of working age benefits (regardless of how much the cost of food or clothes or nappies rise) and cuts to tax credit and universal credit for working families have been cited time and again by independent analysts as key drivers of the ongoing rise in rates of poverty.

It's a bleak picture and it can sometimes seem overwhelming. There's a real temptation for us to throw up our hands in frustration and defeat. After all, what can really be done here in Scotland to make a dent in such massive rises in poverty and such swinging cuts in spending.

We should, however, steel ourselves and remember that, in reality, a huge amount can be done.

No, child poverty cannot be eradicated overnight in Scotland. But well designed, adequately funded policies could start to turn the tide on child poverty – and make a significant difference to the tens of thousands of families that are struggling to make ends meet. The Scottish Government knows this. It's one of the reasons for its decision to introduce a Child Poverty (Scotland) Bill to eradicate child poverty in Scotland by 2030. One policy that would set the Scottish Government well on

its way to this goal would be using newly devolved social security powers to top-up reserved benefits.

CPAG along with the Poverty Alliance, One Parent Families Scotland, the Church of Scotland and the Children's Commissioner for Children and Young People and many others are calling on the Scottish Government to use its new social security powers to top-up child benefit by £5 per week for every child in Scotland.

To some, £5 a week sounds like small change. Enough for a latte and a Sunday paper. But we know that it's enough to make a significant difference both at national level (by reducing levels of child poverty by up to 14%) and at household level (by making a significant contribution to the everyday cost of living).

£5 a week could mean seven breakfasts of cereal, milk, fruit juice and a banana for a child. Over two months it could mean a good quality coat to see a child through the Scottish winter. Over the course of a year it could pay for a child to go away on a week-long P7 trip with his friends. These are real, tangible resources and experiences that could make a significant difference to the health, wellbeing and attainment of Scotland's children.

£5 could also help to ease the pressure on stressed out parents that are struggling to make ends meet. Rebecca, a lone parent living in Inverness told us that an extra £5 a week "would be beneficial. With so many bills it would be one day less crying".

While many support the idea of using top-up power to invest in family benefits, they are less convinced that child benefit is the right one to top-up. Surely it makes more sense, they argue, to top-up benefits that are only paid to families on the lowest incomes. Why not add £5 or even more to the value of means tested benefits like universal credit or child tax credit that are targeted at those on the lowest incomes?

Indeed, at a time of strictly limited resources and competing demands for government spending such an approach makes a lot of sense and it's an approach that we



## GIVE ME FIVE

have given a great deal of thought here at CPAG. The real difficult, however, is that getting extra money only to those at risk of poverty can be administratively problematic - even impossible - and would result in many of the children in the greatest need missing out.

Problems with making a Scottish top-up dependent on the family being in receipt of a 'means-tested' benefit include the following.

### **Means tested benefits are unpredictable.**

Cases that CPAG has gathered through its early warning system highlight the fact that means tested benefits are often subject to long delays, sanctions and suspensions - often with little rhyme or reason. The resulting sudden falls in household income often drive families into income crisis and to the doors of their local food bank.

*A young couple with two small children have been left with very little income for five months and substantial rent arrears as they were repeatedly incorrectly advised that they were not entitled to UC. Initially their claims were not accepted and they were advised to claim tax credits, but this was refused as the couple live in a full service area. After three months a claim was accepted but immediately erroneously closed.*

In terms of the Scottish Government's powers, the problem lies in the fact that topping up unpredictable benefits would make that top-up unpredictable too.

Child benefit on the other hand is administratively simple. It isn't based on complicated income calculations that can be botched. It isn't subject to sanction or suspension. Indeed it is very often the only source of income that families presenting at food banks have when their means tested benefits and the system delivering them have failed.

### **Fewer and fewer families get means tested benefits.**

There was a time when most families with children at risk of poverty were in receipt of some kind of means tested benefit - whether that be income support or

child tax credit or both. Cuts and restrictions to benefit entitlements, however, mean that the pool of families eligible for those benefits is shrinking. So while six out of ten families with children were eligible for tax credits in 2015, only five out of ten families will be eligible for universal credit by the time it is fully rolled out. In this way, making the Scottish Government's top-up contingent on eligibility for UK benefits could chip away at its value over time, leaving many of the 70% of children in poverty that live in working households at risk of missing out.

### **It can be hard to know who gets what means tested benefit.**

Finally, families move in and out of eligibility for means tested benefits over time as their incomes rise and fall with changing earnings, redundancy, pregnancy and the many other complexities of everyday life. Again if the Scottish Government's top-up was linked to receipt of means tested benefit then it too would come and go as families circumstances changed. The real difficulty would be keeping up to date with who is and who isn't entitled to these means tested benefits. Much of this information is held by the DWP or HMRC so making the Scottish Government dependent on those agencies ability and willingness to share that information in a timely way.

So while any use of new powers that significantly boosted family incomes in Scotland would be welcome there are strong arguments for prioritising a £5 top-up to universal child benefit.

Above and beyond administrative and practical concerns topping up child benefit would send a powerful signal that all children in Scotland are worthy of support. In terms of Scotland's relationship with its social security system, sending a message like that could be invaluable.



## MEMBERSHIP: JOIN US!

The Poverty Alliance is a national anti-poverty development agency for Scotland which seeks to combat poverty through collaborative action, bringing together workers and activists drawn from the public sector, voluntary organisations, community groups and other agencies.

The Alliance's wide range of activities provide many opportunities for members to exchange information and expertise which benefit the anti-poverty movement.

The benefits of membership include regular mailings, Scottish Anti-Poverty Review, opportunities to become involved in working groups and access to a wide range of organisations and activists who have the potential to influence the direction of anti-poverty policy in the future.

### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name and designation of contact person: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name and address of organisation: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

#### MEMBERSHIP FEES:

FULL MEMBERSHIP: OPEN TO CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS: INCOME LESS THAN £50K: FREE | £50,000-£75,000: £50 | £75,000-£175,000: £75 | £175,000-£500,000: £100 | MORE THAN £500,000: £200

ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP: OPEN TO INDIVIDUALS, VOLUNTARY AND STATUTORY BODIES, AND PRIVATE SECTOR ORGANISATIONS\*: UNWAGED INDIVIDUALS: FREE | INDIVIDUALS: £25 | VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS: £25 | STATUTORY BODIES: £300

\*PLEASE CONTACT THE POVERTY ALLIANCE FOR DETAILS

I/We wish to apply for \*Ordinary/Associate Membership for the year: \_\_\_\_\_

\* Please delete as appropriate. NB Membership of The Poverty Alliance runs from 1st April to 31st March. Applications for new membership received after April 1st are charged on a pro rata basis.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send the completed application form to the address below - thank you.