

SCOTTISH ANTI POVERTY REVIEW



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Missing the
Connection: Transport
and Poverty



WELCOME

EDITORIAL TEAM

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The Poverty Alliance

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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CONTENTS

PAGE

EDITORIAL - Going your way	4-5
RESEARCH COMMENT - So far from Safari: Introducing the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit	6-7
TRADE UNION COMMENT - Tackling Precarious Work – Directly	8-9
THIRD SECTOR COMMENT - Can we fix homelessness in Scotland? Aye We Can...	10-11
Missing the Connection:Transport and Poverty	12-15
Is it time for a new look at fuel poverty?	16-19
Equalities and the Impact of Austerity	20-22



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EDITORIAL

Going our Own Way?



It is almost 20 years since the Scottish Parliament was re-established in Edinburgh. At the time we promised 'Scottish solutions to Scottish problems'. Whilst this was always something of a limiting conception of the scope of the new Parliament, it did suggest that we would start to see new agendas develop, that new voices could be heard and that those new voices could develop the innovative and practical solutions to the challenges we faced. Perhaps our hopes were too high for the promised 'policy divergence', but the evidence of radically new approaches has been, if we are honest, limited. However, whilst at the UK level we endure the uncertainty of the Brexit negotiations and continue to be held in the grip of austerity-led programme of welfare 'reform', there are real signs of a genuinely different approach emerging in Scotland to loosen the grip of poverty on people's lives.

There are three areas that anti-poverty campaigners, and indeed policy makers and commentators more generally, need to reflect on when considering where a genuinely progressive social policy agenda goes next. The first of these is the Social Security Bill that is currently making its way through the Scottish Parliament. For many years campaigners involved in the Scottish Campaign on Welfare Reform (SCoWR)

have been calling for a social security system that respects the human rights of all those who use it and which ensures that they are treated with dignity.

SCoWR have also repeatedly called for a system that provides for an adequate income for all those who rely on it.

Since the introduction of the Social Security Bill, there has been a great deal of debate between campaigners, the Scottish Government and parliamentarians about its detail. There have been disagreements, some of them significant, and there will undoubtedly be more before the Act is finally passed. However, there has been important level of agreement between campaigners and Scottish Government on the foundational principles on which the new social security system is based: that it will respect the dignity and human rights of those who use it. Indeed a new principle was inserted during the debates in committee to reinforce the role that the social security system has in addressing poverty.

From the perspective of someone who is right now, because of the impact of welfare 'reform', being forced to make decisions between heating their home or paying their rent, principles such as these may seem a little distant, a little utopian. That's understandable, and partly true, as these laudable principles will not apply to the majority of social security benefits that many people access. Yet they do set out a different vision and approach to social security, and they are principles that will guide the delivery of social security benefits that will impact on around 1.4million people in Scotland. That means we will have a much stronger basis upon which to make the case for a system that provides adequate incomes. Even before the Bill has passed we have seen evidence of that in action, with amendments being supported at stage two that will put in place commitments to have benefits annually updated.

In March the Scottish Government published guidance on the new Fairer Scotland Duty,

previously known as the socio economic duty, which came into force in April. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this didn't hit the headlines at the time. However it is something that many campaigners, including the Poverty Alliance, had been calling for.

It provides us with another tool to hold policy makers to account, by requiring public authorities to put tackling inequality at the heart of the strategic decisions they make. The Scottish Government have rightly highlighted that this is an area where we are departing from the rest of the UK. What is most important though will be the difference that local policy makers and campaigners can make by using the duty – can we, for example, use it to get more secure long term support for organisations like Linwood Community Development Trust or the Galgael Trust in Govan? This will be the true test of the Fairer Scotland Duty.

So social security and tackling inequality are areas where we are on a different route than the rest of the UK when it comes to tackling poverty. However, perhaps the clearest divergence comes when we look at our approach to tackling child poverty. The Scottish Child Poverty Act 2017 had already set out the poverty reduction targets that we need to meet by 2030. As the chair of the Poverty and Inequality Commission, Douglas Hamilton, recently reminded us, these are some of the most ambitious poverty targets anywhere in the world. The Child Poverty Delivery Plan that was published in March started to put the meat on the bones of these targets. Here again there were promising signs: commitments to bring in new measures to boost family incomes using our social security powers, more commitments on promoting the real Living Wage and Fair Work, more support to help parents into work.

There's no doubt that we will need to see even greater commitments in the future if we are to have any chance of reaching our child poverty targets. But in the face of rising child poverty it is right that the Scottish Government has set out a path that identifies the action we can take to unlock people from poverty.

That path is different to the one being followed elsewhere in the UK and Europe. Almost 20 years on from the reconvening of the Scottish Parliament, perhaps we really are starting to see the development of those 'Scottish solutions' that we have all been waiting for.

Peter Kelly
Director



RESEARCH COMMENT

So far from Safari: Introducing the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit

In his regular column Professor John McKendrick at Glasgow Caledonian University reflects on the launch of the new Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit at the University.



On the 20th of March 2018, GCU launched SPIRU, the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit. It came in the middle of a busy month for those concerned to tackle poverty in Scotland. Following the publication in February 2018 of the Poverty and Inequality Commission's Advice on the Scottish Government's Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2018, Policy Scotland published a series of poverty commentaries, including contributions from SPIRU's Co-Director Stephen Sinclair and Evan Williams of the University of Glasgow. The middle of the month brought a flurry of media interest, following on from a SPIRU briefing that argued the importance of tackling child poverty locally and cautioned that poverty was present in all 32 local authorities in Scotland, including the most affluent. And the month ended with the publication by Scottish Government of its first delivery plan in accordance with the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017, in which it outlined the first steps toward the eradication of child poverty in Scotland by 2030.

March is also the month of the annual Aye Right! book festival in Glasgow.

Alongside national treasures such as Sir Chris Bonnington, Graeme Obree, Archie MacPherson, Val McDermid, Robert Peston, (okay, maybe treasure is stretching a point here), and Shami Chakrabarti, was Darren McGarvey (aka Loki) who was sharing his thoughts around Poverty Safari, published in 2017 with the strapline of "understanding the anger of Britain's underclass".

It is the latest in a tradition of Scottish writing about the lived experience of poverty that includes Bob Holman's Faith in the Poor, Cathy McCormack's The Wee Yellow Butterfly, the multimedia testimonies of the Poverty Truth Commission, and of course, much work of the Poverty Alliance, past and present.

There is much in Poverty Safari that resonates with the way in which SPIRU wants to work and the objectives it wants to achieve. For example, having listed 24 outcomes for him and his four siblings (zero have gone to university, five have experienced long term financial problems, etc.), he then cautions "There comes a point when

being objective about this stuff starts to look like procrastination from acting" (p.109). Point taken.

SPIRU wants to be known for better understanding poverty, as a prelude to tackling it more effectively. For SPIRU, research and reflection is a means to an end, rather than an end in itself.

Similarly, although he goes on to acknowledge that "people employed in the poverty industry have ... good intentions", he observes that "once you see the mechanics of the poverty industry up close, you realise it's in a state of permanent growth and that without individuals, families and communities in crisis there would no longer be a role for these massive institutions" (p.124). Point taken. For the avoidance of doubt, SPIRU's ultimate aim would be to contribute to the effort to make it redundant, i.e. to eradicate poverty and the need for a research unit to contribute toward this. Until then, there is much to be gained by bringing together all of the diverse constituencies with an interest in tackling poverty, i.e. people experiencing poverty, academics, anti-poverty activists, decision-makers in local and central government and so on.

Toward the end of the book, Darren reflects on his experience of engaging with the debate around Ellie Harrison's 'Glasgow Effect' project, in which the artist was funded to live within Greater Glasgow for one year to explore the impact of local living on artistic practice. Whilst Darren acknowledged some misperceptions (ill-formed preconceptions) that shaped the thinking behind his criticisms of Ellie's work, he was critical of "misguided, clumsy and poorly conceived" projects that might be akin to a 'poverty safari' (pp. 201-213). Point taken. Respectful inquiry that is sensitised to the lived experiences of those with whom we work – be they researchers, activists, politicians, people experiencing poverty and those who do not – is part of the DNA of SPIRU.

SPIRU is a network, which means it is open to involving all who have an interest in understanding and tackling poverty in Scotland. It is not elite, self-serving or insensitive.

We view ourselves as a resource upon which the anti-poverty sector in Scotland can draw, as we pull together to rise to the challenge of eradicating child poverty by 2030, and tackling poverty in Scotland more generally. To paraphrase Darren McGarvey, "we have good intentions". We also want to be good partners.

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TRADE UNION COMMENT

Tackling Precarious Work – Directly



'The 'beast from the east' shut down large parts of Scotland earlier this year. In this article Cailean Gallagher of the STUC describes the impact on workers in precarious jobs, and how they coming together to fightback against exploitative conditions.'

Anna and David live together in a small Scottish town. Between them they get paid £11 per hour. Half a day's lost pay has big implications.

They can see each others' workplace from their own, and on the day of the red weather alert, they headed into their work at McDonald's and KFC. But after a few hours of working in sub-zero, they both decided enough was enough.

McDonald's conceded quickly to shut the store while paying scheduled hours, and so David headed to KFC to join the efforts there. Requests from the KFC store manager to close were denied by the area manager. A number of their colleagues signed up to the union, BFAWU. After agitating for three hours and presenting a letter withdrawing their labour the store was ordered to shut at 4pm – with the manager's verbal assurance that workers would be paid for scheduled hours.

But Anna and the others at KFC did not get paid.

Like thousands of workers across Scotland, this was the choice: go in and stay in work with no safe way to get home at the end, or stay off and face a fall in pay.

The union is continuing to press for redress. But union-building is in its infancy in these and other precarious workplaces that are rife with poverty pay.

The campaign group Better than Zero gathered similar stories from staff across the country. In The Works, bosses deliberately failed to tell them the implications of staying home. Workers in Dominos did not get paid; nor did those in Pizza Hut. In all these sites, workers have started to have discussions about unionisation.

What was startling about the red alert was that corporate guidance was for managers not to tell staff what the consequences would be of their not working. It is a form of maintaining passive obedience that is not just unsettling but unsafe for those who trudged into work to avoid risking

a day's pay or – what's worse for many migrant workers with families abroad, or those with caring responsibilities – losing a day's annual leave. The responses to these events by government, and indeed by some unions, have emphasised the exceptional weather circumstances. But the red alert was only a sharp exposure of what happens on a daily basis, when control rests in the hands of bosses and workers are effectively at their mercy.

Advocacy and representation provide only limited solutions. So too do policy and parliamentary responses. Where workers have managed to resist and push back against precarity and poverty, they have done it through their union.

The challenge is not new either. Unions sometimes act as if precarity is a new form of work, describing the post-recession growth in in-work poverty, where the transience of work today is a new barrier to fighting in-work poverty. But it is not the case. Certainly the economy goes in cycles of higher and lower security for workers, and we are currently in the latter cycle. These are the conditions, and the environment, in which it makes sense to organise on the ground.

From the agency workers of the 1920s America to industrial closures in the 1980s, precarity is not new. The challenge is to ensure that the response to insecurity is durable, and that ways of organising are not as precarious as the work itself. This challenge is what two Scottish Trades Union Congress projects, Better than Zero and the Young Workers Project, are confronting this year.

Across the regions of Scotland, Better than Zero is building up solidarity hubs for workers on poverty pay and workplace insecurity. These start from the impulse that led David to cross the road and support Anna: if I manage to get a decent deal at work, then I can go and support those we care about who don't. In a social union, that means supporting other workers in our town or city.



This will not just include trade unions. Better than Zero is working with the Living Rent to push back against the downward pressure on wages and the upward pressure on rent, and to support the staying power of communities.

It is also focused on training that will develop durable workplace organising, so that when events emerge, then workers are prepared to stand together. Even better, they will be able to tackle unfair exploitative workplace conditions before a crisis happens. Whether these are weather events or economic events, they cannot be predicted. But they can be prepared for.

If you are affected by insecurity or low-pay at work, get in touch with Better than Zero or email cgallagher@stuc.org.uk.



THIRD SECTOR COMMENT

Can we fix homelessness in Scotland? Aye We Can...



Homelessness is quite rightly at the top of the agenda at the moment. In an effort to do more to address the problem the Scottish Government set up an Action Group last year to look at what can be done to address the problem of rough sleeping and homelessness. Maggie Brunjes, Director of Glasgow Homelessness Network and a member of the Group, looks at the recommendations.

Renewed commitments to tackle homelessness in Scotland were announced in September's Programme for Government. This included setting up a short-life action group, creating a new £50m fund over 5 years and investing an additional £20m in alcohol and drug services.

Many of us know that the moment is now; that the conditions we need to deeply tackle the causes and consequences of homelessness are in our favour. Cross-party political commitment, national leadership - and new local leaders emerging, of all types and across all sectors. Along with calls from the frontline, collaboration with lived experience and a realistic level of new resources. There remains plenty of nuanced debate and 'path dependency' - but a momentum, much of it driven by people with first-hand experience of homelessness, that has started to feel unstoppable.

What's the picture?

Last year over 34,000 homeless applications were made. The definition of homelessness in Scotland is broad and rough sleeping a small part of a bigger picture, estimated at around 5,000 people per year. People affected are very likely to experience multiple forms of exclusion, trauma, morbidity and early mortality resulting from adverse life experiences significantly outside the 'normal' range of human experience. The cost of managing homelessness in Scotland runs into hundreds of millions of pounds every year - and the damage it causes people, families and communities is devastating.

We know that poverty, particularly childhood poverty, is the most powerful predictor of homelessness in later life.

This is more influential than factors such as having an addiction, or the strength of your social networks. And note that we are over 8 times more likely to become homeless when our income is under £10k year, than when it is over £20k.

What we recommended

The recently published *Ending Rough Sleeping in Scotland: An Interim Report* contained 20 substantial recommendations, all agreed by Scottish Ministers. These include implementing common characteristics of front-line delivery and more urgent collaboration between third and public-sector services in the interests of people experiencing homelessness.

It is the Action Group's belief that the most powerful intervention we can make is an offer of permanence, stability, housing and wraparound support. This was also the conclusion of the Scottish Parliament's *Local Government & Communities Report on Homelessness*, published in February 2018 following their year long inquiry.

This led to the heart of our recommendations - more targeted prevention of homelessness, alongside a planned, supported and costed transition to a 'Rapid Rehousing' approach. A Rapid Rehousing system is simple, but radical because it significantly challenges established practice. It will drastically reduce the time people spend in transition and in temporary forms of accommodation, understanding that the faster people get their own place, the less damage homelessness does. It will focus on the size and quality of shared 'homeless' accommodation where it is used: smaller and within a psychologically informed environment for any period where mainstream housing is not possible for whatever reason. And it will embrace the Housing First model as an internationally evidenced response for people carrying a lifetime of experiences needing our respect, care and support.

The nature of public service reform required to underpin this change will be clarified at local level over the coming months. ALACHO and COSLA have already welcomed change, stressing it will require concerted effort across the public sector. Housing representative organisations SFHA and CIH have begun briefing on implications for members. The Action Group and many others will now assist this change in every way that's needed. It won't be without challenges, but it will put Scotland in the very best position to prevent homelessness, reduce the time affected by it and the damage it causes.



Missing the Connection: Transport and Poverty



Responding to Challenge Poverty Week last year, Sustrans Scotland published a report on transport poverty in Scotland. It was widely commented on and generated debate. But what is transport poverty? Alex Quayle, Sustrans Scotland Senior Policy Officer, explains.

Although there is no formal definition of transport poverty, the importance of transport availability in relation to accessing essential services is widely documented.

Put simply, when people don't have access to essential services or employment because of a lack of affordable transport options, they suffer from transport poverty. This could mean that someone is forced into owning a car that consumes a large proportion of income to get to work each day. Or it can mean that other essential journeys, such as getting to the shops, takes much longer than it should as the local bus route has been discontinued.

If transport is too expensive or inconvenient for some people to access basic amenities, it leaves them at a disadvantage compared to the rest of society. And, whether a financial or social disadvantage, this reinforces pre-existing issues. Ultimately, transport poverty makes it even harder for a person to break free from poverty and disadvantage.

Sustrans Scotland research

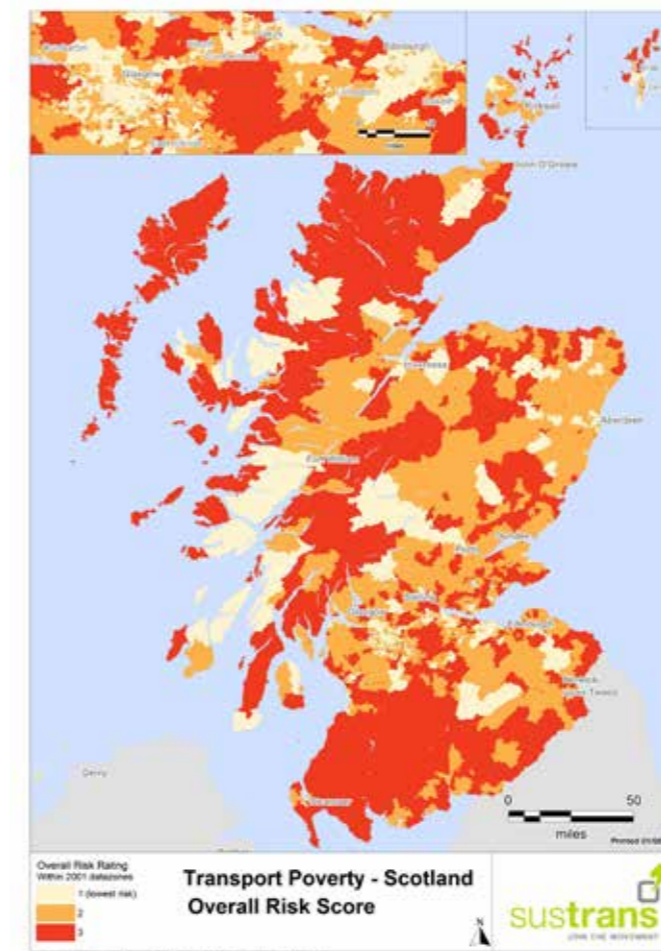
Sustrans first highlighted transport poverty in 2012, with our Locked Out report which looked at the issue for people living in England. Our research then emerged from a sense that a social phenomenon existed and influenced much of the work we did, but that it lacked formal definition or a way to talk about it.

Transport poverty is caused by a mosaic of factors and there is a number of different logical criteria to measure it by. Our researchers looked at household incomes and access to local services by public transport and compared it with car availability to assess the risk in each area. None of these things are, on their own, a sign of transport poverty. But when low incomes are combined with a lack of transport options, the necessity of a car for day-to-day living can lead to transport poverty.

When our researchers applied their calculations to the whole of Scotland, they found that 20% of the neighbourhoods studied were at high risk of transport poverty; places that are home to over 1 million people.

What the data says about Scotland

Sustrans' research into transport poverty contradicted a misconception that poverty is an urban issue. But this is not simply an urban or rural problem; mapping transport poverty reveals a national problem.



From Dumfriesshire to the Shetlands, there are areas at a high risk of transport poverty distributed across Scotland, and the problem exists both in cities and in rural communities.

What these places tend to have in common is poor access to public transport, which we found in 9 out of 10 high risk areas.

Poor public transport, however, doesn't confine the problem to remote areas. In fact, it is accessible small towns (28%) and accessible rural locations (30%) that make up the majority of high risk areas. These are small towns and rural areas that actually have nearby public services, but low household income or a lack of transport options make these services difficult to access.

When we published our research, we spoke to Norlil Charlton in Culbookie, near Inverness, who used to have an easy bus journey into the city for work. In fact, it was the reason she moved to the area. Since the service was re-routed however, she has two bus journeys and a wait by the side of an A-road for a much less frequent service. She doesn't live far from Inverness and all of the amenities of the city, but a change to local transport arrangements cut her off from the convenience of accessing these.

The final piece of our research considered the potential for cycling to help people access essential services. In analysing the high risk areas, we found that 61% were places where vital services could be reached within a 10-minute bike ride. Cycling could be a viable solution to transport poverty for many if we could help to overcome present barriers to widespread uptake of cycling.

Overall, what emerged from our research was a patchwork of poor public transport and areas without attractive, safe cycling infrastructure. Some causes of poverty are shared nationally, but many of the factors that create transport poverty are local. Accordingly, we think action to address it, even on a national scale, has to have local impact.



Missing the Connection Transport and Poverty Cont'd



We need a planning system that instead reflects the wider goals of the Scottish Government to address inequalities, improve health, deliver growth and prioritise better places and communities for people. That starts with local services within walking distance or a safe, convenient bike ride away.

2. Quality public transport

Secondly, access to a car is lower in deprived urban areas, meaning accessible, affordable and frequent public transport should be prioritised in those areas.

Public transport costs have risen sharply in recent years. The cost of bus travel has risen more than twice as fast as car ownership according to the RAC Foundation, and the rise in rail fares is not much further behind ¹. If you rely on public transport to get around, you will have noticed it consuming an increasing part of your income year-on-year.

Bus subsidies from central government are down 5% in five years, passenger numbers are down by the same amount, and revenue from passengers has remained the same ². This means that people are paying more for bus travel. The UK Government has systematically held back planned fuel duty increases. This encourages driving and is a subsidy to people who can afford or access a car, paid for by damage to the environment and public health.

Government and local authorities need to revitalise services, invest and prioritise public transport over private cars to make getting around more affordable for everyone.

3. Better provision for cycling

Finally, we need to empower people to travel actively by making cycling an easier, safer choice for everyone. To offer more people this choice we need:

- Safe cycle routes in all communities
- Secure bike parking, especially in residential areas
- Wider access to bikes through public bike hire, bike libraries or purchase subsidies
- Maintenance and repair facilities in public places

Cycling won't be the choice for everyone, but it does offer an alternative for some to being dependent on a car, and the cost savings associated with swapping a car for a bike for local journeys offer families a financial boost and will improve people's health.

Health inequalities

More than just a lack of access to opportunities, transport poverty has wider impacts.

In Glasgow, the most affluent people are three times more likely to cycle than the least affluent. There are several reasons for this. People cite safety concerns, a lack of infrastructure, lack of parking or facilities at their destination and there is sometimes a false impression that cycling is a middle-class pursuit.

Whatever the reason, if we do not give all people an equal opportunity to cycle we risk passing the health benefits of active travel and physical activity to particular segments of society. If planning fails to put safe, convenient infrastructure in an area it denies the community the benefits to their health from walking and cycling. This can become another symptom of disadvantage, be self-reinforcing and trap people in deprivation.

Scotland struggles with health inequalities. Even within Glasgow, a man born in Bridgeton can expect to live 14.3 years fewer on average than his counterpart in Jordanhill, and a woman 11.7 years fewer on average ³. It is a social injustice for which many of the causes and solutions are known. However, these solutions, such as better diet and more exercise, have so far proven difficult to successfully implement.

Getting your required physical activity whilst completing journeys you need to make anyway is one of the best ways to do so, but we need more designated, safe active travel infrastructure in all communities.

We need to ensure that access to easy physical activity through walking and cycling routes does not neglect any part of society.

Our research led to discussions in the Scottish Parliament, and MSPs of all parties were quick to recognise the role of walking and cycling to tackle transport poverty and to improve the nation's health. But what else should politicians and policymakers be doing?

What next for transport poverty?

Sustrans have found the term 'transport poverty' is the best way to explain a complex idea.

Whilst we are reluctant to place a label on yet another type of poverty, it is inarguable that there is a system of disadvantage centred on people's ability to get around, and get to and from simple amenities.

We don't intend for transport poverty to become a separate aspect of poverty to analyse, nor a separate discipline for study. However, we do see a need for more research on how transport is part of wider social outcomes, and how transport can play a role in increasing social inclusion and equality of opportunity.

We welcome MSPs discussing the issue in parliament, but the issue also requires the Scottish Government to take a wider focus on issues like diet and obesity, active travel, public transport, air quality policy and placemaking.

The positive news is that we know many of the impacts of transport policy. Sustrans promote a strong body of evidence that walking and cycling promote social inclusivity, and are accessible, affordable ways to make everyday journeys. If we can better understand how transport policy can impact poverty and the causes of poverty, we can build a transport system that benefits people, places, society and communities.

To find out more about the work of Sustrans in Scotland visit <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/scotland>

How Sustrans tackles transport poverty

Our research leads us to three things that can tackle transport poverty.

1. People-centred transport planning

Firstly, we need a planning system that puts necessary services where people live.

People should be able to access shops, schools and healthcare within a short distance on foot, without the need for a car. Instead, too often we see the products of a system that promotes large out-of-town retail parks with little option other than to drive. Or a system that allows new developments with few services and fewer active travel options for the reason that there are big roads for access by car.

Our planning system reflects a culture where the car is king. Transport planning seems to be set up to move vehicles rather than people.

The planning system places an assumption on car ownership, which therefore prioritises people who can afford (and want) a car.

FOOTNOTES

1. <https://www.racfoundation.org/data/cost-of-transport-index>
2. <https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/scottish-transport-statistics-no-35-2016-edition/SCT01171871341-05/#tb9>
3. <http://www.healthscotland.scot/health-inequalities/measuring-health-inequalities>



Is it time for a new look at fuel poverty?



More than a quarter of Scotland's households are classed as living in fuel poverty. As the Scottish Government begins to develop a new fuel poverty strategy, and with new legislation on its way, Norman Kerr, Director of Energy Action Scotland, considers what more needs to be done.

Energy Action Scotland (EAS) is the Scottish charity with the sole remit of ending fuel poverty. EAS has been working with this mission since its inception in 1983 and has campaigned on the issue of fuel poverty while delivering many practical and research projects to tackle the problems of cold, damp homes. Our focus has never wavered in this context and so it was important that the organisation delivered a strong and robust response to the Scottish Government's consultation on a new Fuel Poverty Strategy for Scotland and equally important, a new fuel poverty definition. What follows is an explanation of our thinking and our motivation for responding as we did.

So why is fuel poverty still so important? The reasons are many but having failed to meet its statutory target to eradicate fuel poverty by 2016 (as laid out in the Housing Scotland Act 2001), it is vital that by our inaction we do not condemn further generations of Scottish households to a life where they have to make the choice between heating or eating,

perhaps living in a home that quite frankly puts a strain on their health, both physical and mental.

The level of fuel poverty in Scotland, or the number of households (not individual people), make stark reading. They are calculated annually by the Scottish House Condition Survey and the latest findings released in late 2017 show that there are currently 649,000, or 26.5% just over a quarter of households living in fuel poverty.

Behind each of these statistics are real individuals and families who face the real impact of fuel poverty. Living in debt, in cold and mouldy homes and sadly in many cases, having to choose between having a hot meal on the table or putting the heating and or TV on for a few hours.

The question of who is in fuel poverty hangs on its definition. The definition of fuel poverty has been around since the mid 1980s/early 1990s and has served its time. It was founded on good solid

evidence brought forward by a leading academic but as time has moved on the definition, the Boardman definition, was capturing a few people and families that it might be easy to describe as being well above the poverty line. For that reason the two working groups, set up by the Scottish Government as part of the response to their failure to meet their statutory fuel poverty target, recommended that the existing definition be reviewed. The two expert groups submitted a further 108 recommendations but the review of the definition seemed, for the Scottish Government at least, to be a reasonable place to start.

The current fuel poverty definition was pretty straight forward, stating that if you had to spend 10% or more of your income on fuel, then you were in fuel poverty. However this high level definition was underpinned by a number of assumptions. These included what was assumed to constitute household income, the age of vulnerability as well as what comprised a satisfactory heating regime. The Scottish Government review took all of these issues into consideration.

The Scottish Government engaged with a group of academics to undertake the review and their recommendations formed part of the recent consultation on a future energy efficiency and fuel poverty strategy. In its response to the consultation, EAS noted its disappointment that the Scottish Government has chosen not to accept the expert panel's recommendation on the adjustment of the Minimum Income Standard (MIS) threshold, the threshold that would be used to determine if someone was in fuel poverty or not due to their level of household income.

The Poverty Alliance used the MIS in its work around the living wage and it is a good starting point. However EAS knows, as did the panel, that when it comes to fuel costs, consumers in Scotland and particularly the north of Scotland pay a much higher cost for not only fuel but for other household goods and services, the so called 'rural poverty premium'.

Making the use of an adjusted or weighted MIS is more appropriate for the calculation of poverty in Scotland rather than the use of a UK MIS.

In the consultation, the Scottish Government states, "We believe it is unacceptable for people to face these fuel poverty challenges just because of where they live". EAS would question, therefore, why the Scottish Government believes that the use of a UK MIS is appropriate.

On a more positive note, when examining and calculating household income the suggestion is that this should be After Housing Costs (AHC). In the original definition and in the original Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, it was stated that the Scottish Government would measure fuel poverty using both Before Housing Costs (BHC) and AHC and to report on both these figures, but failed to do so on any kind of regular basis. Reporting on BHC can falsely inflate a household's income, particularly if they receive housing benefit. Housing benefit is money they do not have use of for any other purpose, it is not disposable income and therefore cannot be counted as such. This clarification is welcomed by EAS.

When considering vulnerability, the old definition assumed that anyone who had reached the age of 60 would be considered as vulnerable and as such would require a much higher heating regime to stay warmer and healthier at home. This may have been true some years ago but today many people over 60 are in employment and many are fit and active. Can we really class someone in those circumstances as vulnerable? The Scottish Government has suggested that vulnerability could be seen to start at 75 years of age and therefore could use this as this threshold for identifying those who are likely to be vulnerable to the adverse health outcomes of fuel poverty.

Our ongoing dialogue with public health specialists and clinicians alike demonstrates that for many health professionals, the age of 75 is when most people would fall into the category of vulnerability.



Health professionals believe that no matter how well individuals have looked after their health, by the age of 75 they are more likely to take longer to recover from minor illness and are more exposed to poor levels of personal health.

However, our work with front line workers and integrated services brings with it the knowledge that in the most disadvantaged communities in Scotland, many people are quite simply unlikely to live to 75 years of age. In many of these areas people become 'elderly' (in terms of health and development of multiple long term conditions and co-morbidities) at 50 years of age and this must be recognised as a key factor in ensuring appropriate weighting to meet individual needs at locality levels. This is in line with EAS' belief that any person who suffers from a long-term health condition or disability, regardless of age, should be classed as vulnerable.

The consultation also looked at island and rural communities in "recognising the distinctiveness of all our communities". EAS noted that it is unfortunate that the proposals contained within the consultation failed to recognise the particular fuel poverty issues faced by island communities.

In particular EAS was disappointed that the Scottish Government were not taking forward the Independent Panel's proposal to include a specific remote rural enhancement to the new MIS income threshold. EAS went further noting that it felt there was a marked absence of the voice of lived experience in the consultation. We felt that no longer do we see well-meaning organisations provide a 'done unto' approach but rather we hear the voice and multiple perspectives of lived experience. This lets us listen to the solutions suggested and work to co-produce sustainable services that meet genuine, self-identified need, especially in rural and remote communities where population based solutions can be inappropriate.

A further key area for us is health and the design of local services across the 31 Integrated Authorities (IAs). This includes the ongoing local intelligence gathering initiatives that are being used to design services at locality level across them, as these are key to measuring whole population impact and tackling the enormous toll on Scotland's public health.

The NHS NSS Information and Statistics Division (ISD) is currently working with IAs to gather data

that is relevant to local priorities. Fuel poverty is an issue across primary care, secondary care (for example, where it compounds and causes delayed discharge) and social care where individuals can be identified and supported by services designed to meet and even anticipate their needs. This new approach is vital for a Government committed to delivering care "at home or in a home like setting" particularly where the energy cost of delivering care via aids and adaptations must be borne by the individual, adding further burden to vulnerable individuals and households.

For example, for every one degree that the temperature drops below 5 degrees centigrade, GP consultations for respiratory illness in older people increase by 19%. The World Health Organisation (WHO) attributes 15% to 33% of winter deaths to respiratory disease.

In Scotland, 9% of hypertension cases could be prevented by maintaining indoor temperatures of about 18 degrees. The WHO attributes 50% to 70% of winter deaths to cardio vascular conditions and in this country six people die unnecessarily every single day of winter due to cold homes. These are numbers which simply cannot continue to be treated as an orphan issue.

From an EAS perspective there is a natural partnership between housing, IAs and local authorities. This partnership has the potential to sponsor better use of resources and better outcomes to tackle fuel poverty at a whole system level that will reduce impact on health services, save lives, improve health and ensure more homes in Scotland are fit for purpose.

In looking past the definition there is also the need to have and to set a new statutory target to eradicate fuel poverty in the Warm Homes Bill. For EAS, it is inconceivable not to set a new statutory target to eradicate a problem that has been a blight on society for nearly two generations.

Fuel poverty is intolerable in a modern society and everything that can be done should be done to address it. By setting a new statutory target, progress can be measured and those households living in fuel poverty can be assured of action being taken to eradicate it. It also means that the Scottish Government and successive governments can be held accountable to Parliament and should set in place actions and programmes to tackle the problem.

The Scottish Government set out proposals on sub-targets and a timeframe but here again EAS felt that sadly the proposed sub-targets, levels and timeframes failed to show a willingness to urgently tackle the problem; rather it suggests a near 'business as usual' approach which would condemn a further generation to poor health, unaffordable housing and high energy costs. The Scottish Government's modelling indicates that adoption of the new definition would reduce fuel poverty levels by approximately 5%.

This would bring current fuel poverty levels to less than 22%. The sub-targets seem unambitious at best.

A more realistic timescale is needed. EAS understands the fact that the problem can't be addressed overnight but the date of 2040 is simply too far away to be meaningful. A date so far away allows Government to take their foot off the pedal towards progress and action, simply pushing the required progress and action further down the road.

So until such times as we stop making people choose between heating and eating, stop forcing people to stay in homes that make them ill and in extreme cases contribute to the number of excess winter deaths each year and until we have programmes and support mechanisms that help vulnerable people, fuel poverty will remain at the top of our agenda because a warm, dry affordable to heat home is after all, a basic human right.



Equalities and the Impact of Austerity



Over the years the impact of welfare change has been well documented in SAPR. However, how changes have been felt by different groups is less well understood. In this article Nora Uhrig, Senior Associate at the Equality and Human Rights Commission in Scotland, highlights the key findings from a review of the past or future impact of austerity.

From the transfer to Universal Credit, the benefits freeze to the introduction of the benefit cap, the tax and social security systems in the UK have seen dramatic and wide-ranging changes over the last eight years. At the Equality and Human Rights Commission, we wanted to know how much individuals and households are expected to lose or gain as a result of these changes per year by 2021-22, and how these changes impact individuals and households with, or who share protected characteristics¹. In 2017, we commissioned Aubergine Analysis and Landman Economics to carry out a cumulative impact assessment of the impacts of tax and spending decisions made by the three UK Governments between May 2010 and January 2018. The findings of this research were published on 14 March 2018².

Our cumulative impact assessment clearly demonstrates that, across Great Britain, the changes to taxes, tax credits and social security have had a detrimental impact on the people with the lowest incomes and people with, or who share, protected characteristics. For example, women will lose an average of £385 per year compared to the £27 that men will lose by 2011-12. While white households will have an average of £577 less per year, black households will lose £1,540 per year and Asian households £1,929.

The detrimental impact of these policies does not stop at race or sex. A household of two non-disabled adults with no children will, on average, gain £766 per year by 2011-12, whereas a household consisting of at least one disabled adult will lose £472.

The difference becomes even more shocking when examining the impact on households with children.

A household consisting of non-disabled adults and non-disabled children will have an average of £1,315 less by 2011-12. A household with at least one disabled adult and one disabled child will generally see their income reduced by £6,513, accounting for over 13% of the household's average net income. In general, a couple with children will have £3,031 less and lone parents £5,247 less per year in 2011-12.

In addition, the reforms hit the poorest the hardest. In England, households with the lowest 10% of income (households in decile 1) will lose an average of £1,194 per year and households in decile 2 lose the most with £2,159 per year in 2011-12. Compare that to the average of £291 per year that households in decile 9 will gain and the mere £18 that the richest 10% of households (households in decile 10) will lose per year in 2011-12. It is also important to remember that losing £18 per year is highly unlikely to have a large effect on the living standards of the richest households, while households with the lowest incomes will be much more impacted by every single pound that they lose. Give Me Five, the campaign that called on Members of the Scottish Parliament to include a £5 top-up per week of the child benefit in the 2018-19 budget, illustrates this³. According to the campaign, the suggested £5 top-up would help to elevate 30,000 children in Scotland out of poverty⁴.

In Scotland, the picture is slightly different. The package of reforms introduced by the Scottish Government include the mitigation of the so-called bedroom tax, increases to the Carer's Allowance from the summer of 2018, the introduction of Best Start Grants and changes to the income tax rates from 2018-19. The largest negative impact of the reforms (of between £320 and £390) is for couples of working-age and households with multiple benefit units, which means more than one single adult or couple living at the same address. These households are more likely to have more than one adult working full-time and therefore more likely to be affected by the increase in income tax rates.

Subsequently, the households that are most likely to see the least negative impact of the Scottish reforms are households with lower employment rates, such as lone parents with an average loss of £60 per year and pensioners with an average loss of £35 per year. Lone parents with young children will also see an increase in income from the Best Start Grant.

In general, our findings show that the Scottish reforms are much more progressive, meaning that they have much less of a negative impact on the lower-income households than on higher-income households. The reforms, for example, entail that the richest households (households in decile 10) lose over £1,000 per year, while the households in deciles 1 to 4 lose less than £50 on average per year.

However, the actual losses and gains that Scottish households will experience is a combination of the Holyrood and Westminster reforms. This means that the overall impact on households in Scotland is still regressive. On average, Scottish households in decile 1 will see losses of just under £900 and households in decile of slightly over £1,650 per year compared to the £1,194 and £2,159 per year English households in decile 1 and 2 will lose in 2011-12. The lower figures for Scotland do not just result from the Scottish Government's reforms – lower rent levels for claimants of Housing Benefit in Scotland than in England also explain some of the difference.

The research has also looked at what these findings mean in terms of a potential increase in child poverty. Based on our results, Scotland will see an increase in child poverty of around 8 percentage points from 25.1 per cent in 2010 to 33.1 per cent in 2021-22 as a result of the UK and Scottish reforms. Wales will see an increase of slightly under 8 percentage points from 29.6 to 37.4 per cent, while England will have the biggest increase at just under 11 percentage points from 31.4 to 42.1 per cent. However, it is again lone-parent households who will see the biggest negative impact. The child poverty rate for children in lone-parent households in Great Britain is expected to rise from 37 to just over 62 per cent.



Overall, we will see an additional 1.5 million children in Great Britain living in poverty by 2021-22 as a result of the tax and social security reforms.

This illustrates the importance of some of the recent legislative and policy changes in Scotland. The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017, for example, reinstates income-based child poverty targets after the UK Government's decision to remove the UK-wide targets. This makes Scotland the only nation in the UK with statutory targets to reduce child poverty. But in order for these targets to be met, clear actions will need to be taken by the Scottish Government, local authorities and other public bodies.

The Fairer Scotland Duty, which is due to come into force on 1 April 2018, will require public bodies to consider the impacts on tackling inequality and poverty when making key strategic decisions. The Commission believes that our cumulative impact assessment demonstrates the clear need to examine and consider the cumulative impact of policies and their particular impact on people with, or who share protected characteristics when making such strategic decisions.

We need to do more in Scotland to reduce the growing inequality and poverty. This also requires us to look at how we can influence the UK as a whole to take a different approach where necessary.

Despite the Scottish Government's commitment to taking a human rights based approach to social security, the impact of this commitment will be limited by the fact that the Scottish Government will only gain control over around 15% of the total social security budget for Scotland.

We have called on the UK Government to review the level of benefits to ensure that they provide an adequate standard of living for households who rely partially or wholly on transfer payments, in line with the UK's international human rights obligations under the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Scottish Government should do the same, and cumulative impact assessments should be prepared for each fiscal event. The Scottish Government should also publish Equality Impact Assessments of the key individual tax and social security measures which it plans to introduce, and make use of cumulative impact assessments. Especially in light of these findings, and recent policy developments such as the new child poverty targets and the Fairer Scotland Duty, public bodies across Scotland should be looking at the cumulative impact of their decisions and, most importantly, act to reduce the inequality we currently face and try to prevent the increase in poverty that these findings indicate.

FOOTNOTES

1. There are nine protected characteristics, as detailed in the Equality Act 2010: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. Unfortunately, due to insufficient data being available in relation to some protected characteristics, it was not possible to assess the impact based on religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy and sexual orientation.
2. J. Portes & Reed, H. (2018) *The Cumulative Impact of Tax and Welfare Reforms*, EHRC: Manchester
3. Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland (2018), *Give Me Five – The child benefit top up campaign*. Available from: <http://www.cpag.org.uk/content/give-me-five-child-benefit-top-campaign> [accessed on 20.03.2018].
4. Ibid.



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 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.

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

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.