

# SCOTTISH ANTI POVERTY REVIEW



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SUPPORTING FAMILIES IN  
THE SCHOOL HOLIDAYS





## 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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# WELCOME

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## EDITORIAL

### Communities



There is little doubt what is dominating the news at the start of 2019. Brexit has been the focus of much political debate in Scotland and the rest of the UK for many, many months. Now as we get down towards the wire, with still very little clarity on how we will be leaving the EU, it is important to take a step back and consider what else is going on in the communities and families that really should be our focus of attention.

In Scotland we have seen some really important developments over the last year. As Aileen Campbell MSP, the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government, writes in this edition we have seen a good deal of activity in the last year aimed at supporting families and communities affected by poverty. The first Child Poverty Delivery Plan was full of good plans and proposals for tackling poverty here. In his column, John McKendrick reminds us of the degree of political unanimity that exists in Scotland on the need to tackle poverty. He's right, and we shouldn't forget the importance of that rhetorical support for addressing poverty in Scotland.

However, even with all laudable actions and political consensus that exists here the number of people in Scotland locked in poverty is growing. Issues like the benefits freeze and the problems with Universal Credit continue to harm the lives of individuals and families right across the country. At the same time, the support that is needed to help those families is under real pressure.

In the first few weeks in the year we learned that Fife Gingerbread, a key member of the Poverty Alliance and an organisation that has helped thousands of families over the last 25 years, was facing significant cuts to its services.

We have witnessed the work that Fife Gingerbread have done over the years and seen women that are involved with the organisation flourish as a result of the support they have received. We have seen those same women go on to become campaigners and advocates for change in their communities and beyond. The impact of an organisation like Fife Gingerbread is sometimes difficult to quantify, but it is also hard to overstate how much communities across Scotland need organisations like them.

Of course, they are not alone in facing uncertain times. Pilton Community Health Project, and six other important community-based organisations, in Edinburgh were told in December that they were having their funding removed by the Integration Joint Board leaving them facing likely closure. These are organisations that are the connective tissue in the communities they work in; they are as much an essential service as police, social work and health.

There are strong local campaigns to find the resources to keep these organisations open and providing their vital services and we hope they are successful. We've seen other local campaigners score notable victories when faced with cuts. In Glasgow, the Whitehill Pool in Dennistoun was saved from the axe, along with other local leisure services, after a grassroots campaign sprung up to defend them. Hundreds of people attended local meetings highlighting the importance and support that these local services had. Glasgow City Council and Glasgow Life changed course in response to the demands of the campaign group and lifting the threat of closure, but it clear that campaign will need to remain active to ensure that there is continued investment in these community resources.

For all of us concerned about poverty in Scotland, the threats to community organisations and to local services are critically important.



As a national anti-poverty network we are all too aware that we need to get more cash into the pockets of people who are locked in poverty right now. So whether it is lifting the benefits freeze, ending the five week waiting period for Universal Credit or making the case for a £5 top up to child benefit, we need to remain focused on the urgent change we need..

At the same time, we need to ensure that resources are available for those organisations and services that are the lifeline for people living on low incomes. This requires politicians at local and national levels to prioritise protecting people on low incomes in the decisions they make. But it also means that community and voluntary organisations across the country must come together to fight to defend these critical services. Without that fight we stand to lose not only the services, but the heart of many communities.

Peter Kelly  
Director



## RESEARCH COMMENT

### New measures, new distractions - Should Scotland embrace the new measure of poverty for the UK proposed by the Social Metrics Commission?

*In the autumn of 2018, the Social Metrics Commission published proposals for a new measure of poverty for the UK. In his regular column, Professor John H. McKendrick of Glasgow Caledonian University reflects on this measurement and the extent to which it should be utilised in Scotland.*



Interlude – thank you for not turning the page. Next to a regressive government policy that is an assault on the wellbeing of people experiencing poverty, there is nothing more frustrating or infuriating for an anti-poverty practitioner than being invited to read yet another article on measuring poverty. So, back to the writing for an explanation for why this one might matter ...

With no sense of irony, the Foreword to the report explains that this new measure of poverty is needed as “much of the last decade of political and policy debate on poverty has focused on whether and how we should

measure poverty, rather than the action needed to drive better outcomes for the most disadvantaged.” The cynic in me might have responded that a more appropriate response to that problem might have been to form a Commission to report on the necessary anti-poverty action that is required in the UK.

My frustrations intensified in the next sentence when a call to arms asserted that, “we also needed to be able to use [the new measure of poverty] to build a new consensus around poverty measurement and action in the UK.” This may be a laudable goal in England where overt government commitment to measure and tackle poverty was abandoned with the repeal in 2016 of the Child Poverty Act 2010. In sharp contrast, Scotland has a national commitment to eradicate child poverty by 2030, the Scottish Parliament having passed the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 with universal cross-party support, at the heart of which is a multi-dimensional definition of poverty against which progress is to be measured.

So, by the end of the first paragraph of the Foreword to A new measure of poverty for the UK, I had lost faith in its rationale and I had cause to seriously question its relevance for Scotland. But, then again, I am an academic and inclined toward statistical geekery, so I read on.

In truth, there is much that is of value in this report that might interest the anti-poverty practitioner. Of particular note:

- Given that our aspirations to eradicate poverty in Scotland are, to some extent, dependent on the decisions taken by the UK government over those chunks of tax and social security that are Reserved matters, any attempt to build consensus around poverty measurement in the UK is to be welcomed.



## RESEARCH COMMENT Cont'd

The benefits for Scotland reach beyond politics. It could be argued that it would provide a more accurate measure of poverty in Scotland:

- It could be argued that it is a more robust measure of poverty in that factors in the impact on disposable income of some inescapable costs over which people often have no control (childcare and costs associated with disability).

In the measure of poverty used in Scotland, we only account for inescapable housing costs.

- It could also be argued that it is a more robust measure of poverty as it acknowledges, on one hand, that poverty might not be experienced by those temporarily on low incomes who are able to draw on their own assets to stave off adverse impact, while on the other hand, it acknowledges that servicing debt might mean that disposable income is much lower than net income (take home pay).
- It has a more comprehensive reach across the population – unlike our measure, which is household-based, it is able to count the poverty that is experienced by those living on the streets and is better placed to gauge poverty in overcrowded households.

But, it is work in progress. The Executive Summary to the report ends with the commitment that the Social Metrics Commission will “continue to play a strong role in leading the development of poverty measurement.” It seems that the Commission has not yet delivered what it set out to achieve – to reach consensus on measurement in order to focus on anti-poverty action. Further evidence for this is hidden in the summary of their approach to measuring poverty, which suggests that more research might be considered to investigate whether there are other inescapable costs that should be factored in to poverty measurement, such as travel-to-work, health and healthcare.

Let me clear. The Social Metrics Commission comprises a group of well-informed experts with good intentions who have produced work of value to everyone concerned with tackling poverty in the UK. However, as the first few sentences of the report correctly suggested, measuring poverty is a means to an end and should only become an issue for the anti-poverty practitioner when faith is lost in the way that poverty is measured. And, that is the key point for Scotland in 2019.

We have a collective sense of purpose and we have a(n imperfect but useful) way of measuring poverty that we can use to hold power to account. Rest assured, the Scottish academic community will continue to engage with UK-wide debates on how poverty is measured. But, lets not get distracted from what matters most – taking actions to ameliorate and eradicate poverty in Scotland.



## TRADE UNION COMMENT

### Equal Pay, Low Pay and the Value of Women



Photo: Public Services International.

*In this edition's trade union comment, Rhea Wolfson of GMB discusses the fight for equal pay in Glasgow, and what it says about the broader issue of the undervaluation of women's work.*

In October GMB Scotland and Unison took over 8000 predominately women workers out on strike. The members were fighting for equal pay after a decade long battle for justice. In the weeks leading up to strike action Glasgow City Council, their employer, used all the tactics in the union busters' handbook but most sinister was to try and rob the striking women of their autonomy, declaring them to be misinformed and misled by union bosses.

This couldn't have been further from the truth in a fight where female union members were in the driving seat. The accusation simply doesn't hold water particularly when you look at the difficult decision members had to make to lose two days of pay.

The Glasgow Women's Strike was about Equal Pay but it exposed the low pay crisis affecting women in local government and opened the door for a wider political and social debate about how we value women's work.

As I write, Glasgow City Council are desperately struggling to recruit new staff in home care but especially in Facilities Management (catering and cleaning). This might be a reputational issue or an issue of timing but I suspect the core problem is that of the 175+ positions they are advertising for the vast majority are part time and many also term time.

Glasgow City Council advertises as paying the 'Glasgow Living Wage' (not to be confused with the actual Living Wage) however, this hides the reality of in work poverty caused by low hours and term time work.

Female dominated sectors- typically the 3 Cs; catering, cleaning and care, tend to require set and irregular working hours but typically businesses and local authorities that benefit and sometimes profit from this work put the burden of these requirements onto the shoulders of low paid women workers.





## TRADE UNION COMMENT Cont'd

It isn't a given that work is organised in this discriminatory manner. If we reversed the burden onto the employer to provide consistent and fair work patterns and eliminate unpaid 'down time' in the form of split shifts or term time work, then women across Scotland could be provided with consistency and security in work.

Thousands of women in local authorities are faced with these contracts and every year another Council jumps on the bandwagon as a way to make budget cuts. We know that women are disproportionately affected by austerity but what that looks like isn't often quantified.

It isn't just about cuts to services but about the cuts to hours, pay and, crucially, shifts. That's before we look at the increased burdens on women at work that result from staff cuts and increased service demands.

We have to ask ourselves why these shift patterns have been accepted for so long. Is it because we see the 3 Cs as an extension of women's work in the home and therefore a necessity or duty that doesn't need to be fairly rewarded? Or is that women only require top up money for the household and low hour contracts with large gaps that 'helpfully' coincide with school terms, are a gift? I suspect it is all of the above and more.

A large percentage of our female members in Glasgow City Council supplement their low hour contracts with multiple contracts which aren't aggregated when it comes to accessing overtime payments. Recently I noticed cleaners in a school signing in at 3am and 4am only to realise that workers were fitting in multiple cleaning posts before most of us are up in the morning. This set up isn't repeated in any male dominated jobs in the Council but it won't be resolved in the ongoing Equal Pay dispute.

Many also have other jobs outside of the Council. This further breaks down any belief we might have in the comfort or benefit of a 'good Council job' as women live in fear of being relocated or having their hours changed which could cause them to lose hours elsewhere.

Women are facing the challenge of cuts to the local government services they provide and the insecurity that comes from largely unorganised work in hospitality and retail.

After a lengthy battle Glasgow women have been successful in their fight and secured over £500 million in settlement. The payment compensates for previous loss however, the fight for equal pay continues as long as the discriminatory scheme is in place and the big fight will happen in 2021 over the new Job Evaluation scheme and the associated pay.

Cheques are due to land over the summer and we continue to remind members not to rely on money that isn't in the bank yet - pleading with them not to take out pay day loans in the meantime. Members have asked whether to declare themselves bankrupt so as not to lose all their Equal Pay settlement to Council Tax arrears payments.

We will win the fight for Equal Pay in Glasgow but achieving genuine equality is a process, not an event and we cannot meaningfully start this journey until society fully wakes up to the scandal of how we continue to undervalue women's work in 21st century Scotland.



## THIRD SECTOR COMMENT

### Change Universal Credit to help prevent homelessness



*The latest Homelessness Monitor Scotland report, funded by Crisis and Joseph Rowntree Foundation, has found that the overall scale of statutory homelessness has been relatively flat for the last five years, but that three-quarters of Scottish local authorities believe that the full rollout of Universal Credit will exacerbate homelessness in their area over the next two years. Deborah Hay, Scotland Policy Officer at the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, reflects here on the changes that can be made to Universal Credit to ensure that this does not happen.*

I've been trying to reconcile what the latest Homelessness Monitor Scotland 2019 tells us, with what I see every day on my commute to and from work.

The latest research by Heriot-Watt University for JRF and Crisis suggests that the numbers of people rough sleeping and presenting as homeless have remained relatively stable in recent years. This has occurred despite the strong headwind of UK welfare reform, undermining efforts across all our front-line services. As such it is welcome news and confirms that further progress is possible.

In Scotland we have a firm commitment to end homelessness backed by clear legislative rights to settled housing. We have significant programmes in place to boost affordable housing supply and to prevent people being swept into homelessness, through specialist advice and assistance.

However, the progress reported in previous years has stalled. It cannot be right that almost 30,000 people were assessed as 'legally homeless' in Scotland, in 2018. While 700 people rough sleeping on an average night might be fewer than previous years, it is still 700 too many.

With over 10,000 people in temporary accommodation, including a sharp recent rise for families, we can't be complacent and equate good policy ambition (which we do have) with outcomes achieved (which we haven't).

One of the challenges in addressing homelessness is that some of it is hidden. And yet, what I see every day has been an increase in visible homelessness and destitution, not only people with evidently complex needs (some of whom I recognise as having been on the street for a long time) but also more women, younger people, and those who may have no recourse to public funds.

Recent Scottish Government statistics reveal that the proportion of homelessness assessments where the applicant had at least one support need, increased from 34% in 2012/13 to 47% in 2017/18.

Our report last year highlighted how those pulled into destitution had commonly experienced harsh debt recovery and benefit deductions, as well as benefit delays, errors and sanctions. Much of that suffering is designed in, compounds existing vulnerabilities and could be avoided.



## THIRD SECTOR COMMENT Cont'd

### Change Universal Credit to help prevent homelessness

The research raises other questions, too. While the national picture is one of stability, locally, the data look quite different. In Edinburgh, for example, homelessness application numbers are down despite critical housing shortages. How can that be? Glasgow has the highest share of rough sleepers in its homeless population, despite improved collaboration between housing, health and social care. Both councils, among others, have been criticised for their failure to provide adequate temporary accommodation to all who need it - clearly the published data doesn't tell the whole story.

The Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan (November 2018) has cross party support and addresses 70 original recommendations, which, if implemented and resourced well, could drive significant progress. As well as moving people quickly into a permanent home, the recommendations have a clear focus on those most at risk and emphasise the need to invest in prevention, working to integrate effective responses across all public services.

We know from work in every part of Scotland's public services that orientating towards effective, early intervention work is challenging to do in practice, whilst still meeting acute and statutory needs. Effective action often requires extra, dedicated resources, strong leadership and a clear strategy to deliver it - including clarity over where to align with existing work (e.g. homelessness and child poverty plans) and what to disinvest from longer term. Stakeholders in this research were concerned that further investment might be needed if meaningful progress was to be made.

When we look at the reasons people give for facing homelessness, after circumstances that are out with the control of the household (landlord wants to sell, the property burns down), the biggest reported contributors are mental health problems and being asked to leave by friends or family. Relationships - as ever - lie at the heart of homelessness, both as risks and solutions.

Better responses to people and households in distress or facing difficult situations, from education, social

work, justice, health - in fact everyone outside the formal housing system, including local communities - are needed to drive down the homelessness figures. Getting it right for young people is critical.

With Universal Credit full service now rolled out in both Edinburgh and Glasgow, and the benefit cap affecting a growing number of families, the pressures on people in poverty and the services trying to support them are likely to increase. Three in four councils who took part in the research said they expect homelessness to rise due to welfare changes. Many already report difficulty in accessing social housing for homeless clients, suggesting more capacity is needed. This makes the shift to effective early intervention work and rigorous evaluation, even more pressing.

Service re-design won't be enough on its own - urgent changes are also needed in the social security system:

- Removing the need for advances, by ensuring the first Universal Credit payment is made within two weeks.
- Improving the way Universal Credit pays for housing costs, so that tenants are not confronted by arrears and demand letters, and landlords are not carrying undue risk.
- Ending the benefit freeze a year early.
- Ensuring front-line services have the skills to deliver bespoke support so people don't fall through the cracks.

Every day I walk to work, I am reminded just how lucky I am, and how vital it is that recent progress in tackling homelessness is not allowed to unravel. If our practice is to match our ambition in intervening early, we will need honest conversations and strong leadership, led by those with direct experience.

*Adapted from a blog published via [www.jrf.org.uk](http://www.jrf.org.uk) on 26th February 2019*



## Poverty and Human Rights: Closing the Accountability Gap



*The visit to the UK in November of Professor Philip Alston, UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, shone a light on the experience of people across the country who are locked into poverty. Here Judith Robertson, Chair of the Scottish Human Rights Commission, reflects on the visit and on the interaction between poverty and human rights.*

Poverty is a human rights issue that still affects far too many people in Scotland. A welcome spotlight fell on this last November thanks to the UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, Professor Philip Alston. The findings from his 12-day fact-finding visit hit the headlines both because of the bleak reality of poverty they revealed, and because of his scathing criticism of UK Government policy failures.

Professor Alston's sharp articulation of the extent and nature of poverty in Scotland and the rest of the UK was of no surprise to those living with the consequences of Universal Credit, benefit sanctions and other 'reforms' to the broader safety net of social protections. His findings also resonated strongly with those who work in frontline support services and advocacy organisations.

Professor Alston is explicit that poverty is a political choice.

And it is a political choice that flies in the face of the international human rights obligations that the UK has signed up to and ratified.

These legal obligations are set out in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights among other international treaties. They include exercising political choices in a way that progressively realises rights, using the 'maximum available resources' to do so. There are also legal obligations to make sure goods and services are available, accessible and adequate for people to realise their rights. And to not allow regression when it comes to rights, nor to allow anyone to fall below a minimum floor of protection.

What has been striking about the UK Government's response to Professor Alston is how dismissive they have been when it comes to these obligations, and how defensive they have been when presented with clear evidence of their failure to meet them.



Although some shifts in policy have recently been announced, these are too little, too late, for the millions of people whose lives and hopes for the future have been blighted by unnecessary poverty. The UK Government has a long way to travel to show meaningful engagement with international accountability for human rights.

In Scotland, we have a more positive political climate when it comes to poverty and human rights – but a gap nonetheless remains between stated ambitions and reality on the ground for people.

Here at the Scottish Human Rights Commission, we hosted meetings between the Special Rapporteur, people with lived experience of poverty and civil society. We heard directly from people affected by issues such as rural poverty, barriers to employment, and inadequate accommodation for Gypsy Travellers. We also heard stark statistics from the Poverty and Inequalities Commission and the Equality and Human Rights Commission about the scale and nature of poverty including alarming health inequalities and suicide rates. It is clear that despite positive ambitions and intentions on poverty by government in Scotland, there has been little change in outcomes in people's lives.

How can we close this gap? The Commission and others have long called for the incorporation of social rights and children's rights into law in Scotland. These calls were repeated by many civil society organisations in their meetings with Professor Alston. Borne of frustration at the gap between rights respecting rhetoric and the reality for people, the message was clear: Scotland's people need stronger accountability for their rights to be realised in a meaningful sense. If we want people's rights to social security, housing, health and food, among others, to be considered at all stages of policy design and implementation, then we need to build systems which support that. And people need stronger ways of holding people in power to account when things go wrong and their rights are not protected and respected.

On 10 December last year, the First Minister's Advisory Group on Human Rights Leadership published its recommendations for a new human rights framework to improve people's lives. Central to these is the recommendation for a new Act of the Scottish Parliament to enshrine economic, social, cultural and environmental rights in Scotland's domestic laws. This would strengthen existing protections for human rights and lead to a full compliance duty on public authorities and, where relevant, private institutions. In our view, this and the Advisory Group's other recommendations are significant and bold, and we welcome the First Minister's commitment to taking them forward in 2019.

Much more work is needed for Scotland to become a place where poverty has been eliminated, and where everyone is able to enjoy their rights to live in health, in adequate housing, with social security and ultimately with dignity. Stronger human rights laws are both a starting point and an end point in making those rights a reality. Human rights legal standards should guide the development of law, policy and practice affecting people's rights. And then, where there are failures at the end point, human rights laws should be a back stop of protection, ensuring redress, remedy and accountability. We look forward to working with colleagues from all spheres to ensure this happens.



## Supporting families in the school holidays

*The Poverty and Inequality Commission recently published advice for the Scottish Government on addressing poverty in the school holidays. Here Douglas Hamilton, Chair of the Commission, gives an overview of this advice and its recommendations for action.*



the lowest incomes receive free school meals, and it is not right that this vital benefit is, in effect, withdrawn at a time when families face the most financial pressures.

Beyond finances and food, however, there are a range of other pressures that families can face during school holidays. For working parents, finding suitable and affordable childcare during school holidays can be a major problem. Anecdotally we heard that some parents may need to give up work or reduce their hours over the holidays because of difficulties finding affordable childcare.

It can be a challenge to provide play opportunities and activities for children when on a low income. Even where free or low-cost activities are available, the cost and availability of transport may be a barrier to accessing them. Parenting may be harder because normal routines stop, and conflicts can increase between siblings or between children and parents. Both children and parents can become socially isolated over the holidays without school or their usual term-time activities. As a result of some of these pressures it has been suggested that 'summer learning loss' may be more significant for children from low-income families and that this may be a factor behind the attainment gap.

There are some great holiday programmes that aim to address some of these issues. The Commission visited and heard about some highly innovative and successful services and projects that are making a real difference to children's lives, providing them with food and activities and often involving parents and other family members. It was clear though that this type of provision was not available consistently across the country and that there was a lack of co-ordination, leading to gaps, duplication and people being unaware of what is available.

When we think about school holidays it is easy to think they are just a few weeks and overlook the fact that school holidays actually make up a quarter of the year. That is equivalent to one week in four when children are not in school and families can be faced with a whole range of extra pressures.

The Poverty and Inequality Commission was asked by the Scottish Government to think about whether there were actions in the Scottish Government's Child Poverty Delivery Plan that could be delivered in tandem to maximise their effectiveness, in particular after school and holiday care and responding to school holiday food insecurity.

When the Commission started looking at these issues it quickly started to focus on school holidays, recognising that holidays make up a significant part of the year and that families face particular pressures at this time when school and term-time routine stop. First of all there are financial pressures, which can include additional food, fuel, activity and transport costs, leaving families with impossible choices to balance their budgets. Food is a particular pressure. During the rest of the year children from families on



## Supporting families in the school holidays



Photo by Charlein Gracia Unsplash

After visiting projects and hearing from parents and children, and discussing ideas with voluntary organisations, local authorities and policy experts, the Commission made three primary recommendations, along with a number of more detailed recommendations.

The Commission's first recommendation was that the Scottish Government should introduce an additional cash benefit during school holiday periods in recognition of the additional costs that families face and that the amount should be set at a level that at least matches the equivalent costs of school meals. The Commission believes that direct cash transfers would provide the most dignified way to lessen the financial pressures on families, offering families choices in how to meet their needs for things like food, activities, fuel and transport. These payments could be implemented this year through the existing school clothing grant payment mechanism, providing an immediate boost for families.

While direct cash transfers should be the first response to help loosen the grip of poverty on families, families also face other pressures during school holidays that require a response that goes beyond cash transfers. The Commission's second recommendation is that the Scottish Government, COSLA and local authorities should work together to take a strategic approach to developing and funding a co-ordinated package of school holiday support that addresses the full range of pressures faced by families with low incomes.

A co-ordinated approach should be taken to supporting families during the school holidays at both a national and a local level. There are lots of different areas of policy and delivery that have an interest in and could contribute to supporting families during school holidays, including those working on food insecurity, out of school care, raising attainment, play, family support, advice services, physical activity, health improvement, employability and beyond.



This could lead to more effective and consistent support.

The Commission has recommended that the Scottish Government should identify a lead official or team to take a role co-ordinating Scottish Government policy relating to school holidays and a co-ordinated approach should be taken across national funding streams that are currently being used to fund holiday programmes. The Commission also recommends that lead officials could be identified within local authorities who would lead work to develop a more strategic, collaborative approach to meeting families' needs during school holidays. This collaborative approach should build on existing provision and involve businesses and social enterprises as well as local authorities and the third sector.

The final recommendation focuses more specifically on holiday club provision. The Commission recommends that, building from existing services, holiday club provision, with nutritious and culturally appropriate food as a core element, should be available for all children from low income families. It is only right that all children who need them should have access to holiday clubs.

The Commission does not recommend a specific model of holiday club, but recommends that families should be involved in designing provision to meet the range of needs in their area. Transport also needs to be thought about as part of holiday club provision. The Scottish Government is developing a new strategic framework for out of school care, including holiday childcare, and the Commission recommends that this should connect to the school holiday programme and should look particularly at opportunities for combining free holiday club provision with paid-for childcare.

The Commission believes we have a responsibility to do more to reduce the pressures that families on low incomes face during the school holidays. Our recommendations for cash transfers, better co-ordination and provision for all children who need it could make a real difference to families lives for the quarter of the year that children are not in school.

*The full version of the Commission's advice can be found on the Commission's website: <https://povertyinequality.scot/publication/poverty-and-inequality-commission-advice-on-poverty-in-school-holidays/>*





## 2018: A year in review

*2018 was a significant year for everyone concerned with tackling poverty in Scotland, with the passing of the Social Security Act and the publication of the Scottish Government's Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan. Here Aileen Campbell MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Communities, reflects on the progress made and the work to do in the year ahead.*



A new year offers a great opportunity to reflect on the successes of the past year, but importantly, to focus on what we still have to do.

2018 was a milestone year for the Scottish Government, with the introduction of some world-leading actions to break down the barriers that cause and reinforce poverty and inequality.

It was also the year in which I became Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government - a privileged position in which I can continue to build on the significant legacy left by my predecessor Angela Constance.

Following the passing of the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act in November 2017, we published 'Every Child, Every Chance', the first Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan, in March last year. The Plan is underpinned by a strong evidence base, and our theory of change outlines the key drivers of poverty reduction that we need to influence, and the families who are most at risk of poverty. By taking action to increase income from work and earnings, reduce household costs and maximise income from social security and benefits in kind, we can deliver lasting change.

Every part of government has a role in reducing child poverty and others need to play their full part too. That's why, in April, we introduced a new duty on the public sector - the Fairer Scotland duty.

This duty requires public bodies, including the Scottish Government, to consider how they can reduce inequalities of outcome, caused by socio-economic disadvantage, whenever strategic decisions are being made.

May saw the first fruits from Every Child, Every Chance, with the announcement of a new £100 minimum School Clothing Grant: a significant increase which is estimated to benefit 120,000 children each year.

At the start of the new school term in August, the Scottish Government became the first government in the world to make free sanitary products available to all 395,000 pupils and students attending schools, colleges and universities throughout Scotland. Backed by £5.2 million, this will help ensure that a lack of access to products will not impact upon an individual's ability to fully participate in education at all levels.

Making good on our commitment to monitor food insecurity, we published the first data set in the Scottish Health Survey Report in September. Scotland is the only country in the UK to routinely monitor food insecurity using the UN's recommended measure, and we will use that data to continue to challenge the causes of it and guide our actions.

September also saw us make a £1 million investment in the Affordable Credit Fund, a joint venture with Carnegie UK Trust and Joseph Rowntree Foundation to boost the affordable credit sector and enable not-for-profit lenders, such as credit unions, to provide access to mid-cost credit to low income families.



## 2018: A year in review cont'd



Following on from that work to provide access to credit, we enhanced the available support to help maximise household budgets. In November we rolled out the Financial Health Check (FHC) for low income families and older people.

The FHC offers personalised advice to ensure people can maximise their incomes and avoid paying the 'poverty premium' where the least well-off pay more for basic services. Delivered by Citizens Advice Scotland and the nationwide network of Citizens Advice Bureaux, the FHC covers things like benefit take up, debt advice, access to free school meals, school clothing grants and cheaper deals on energy and other utilities to reduce household costs. We are investing £3.3 million in this service over the next two years and it is expected to help and support at least 15,000 households in Scotland each year.

In December and as the year drew to a close, it did not spell any let-up in our activity.

We published our second update on the actions committed within our Fairer Scotland Action Plan. One great example of progress is how we're supporting new bodies in Dundee, North Ayrshire and Shetland, led by people with lived experience of poverty, to influence policy-makers and deliver real change. This support is expanding further, with funding provided in Edinburgh for its new Poverty Commission.

We also launched A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People - our Employment Action Plan which sets out our initial actions for delivering our ambitious target to reduce the disability gap by at least half and the timescale for doing so.

December was also the month where the first payments were made of the Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby payments to low income families. Social security plays an important part in tackling child poverty and this support will help cover some of the costs of having children, like purchasing a pram or buying baby clothes.



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These are all actions that will make - and are making - a real difference to people's lives. But they can only be delivered in partnership and without the effort, commitment and dedication of so many, none of 2018's achievements would have been possible and we owe everyone who played a part a debt of gratitude.

So what next? As we enter 2019, we do so under a cloud of uncertainty caused by Brexit. But we cannot let Brexit define us and we must continue to work in the best interests of the people of Scotland with the same pace and urgency of 2018.

Looking ahead there are some key milestones - in spring, we will publish the energy consumer vision and action plan, outlining proposals to make it easier for everyone to access affordable energy.

Summer will see the first progress report on our Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan - providing an update on all our actions, including the Income Supplement. We will also welcome the launch of the statutory Poverty and Inequality Commission.

And in autumn, we will announce plans regarding our commitment to invest £12 million in new parental employment support - designed to help parents access and progress in work, with a particular focus on our priority families and those experiencing in-work poverty.

In a country as prosperous as Scotland, no child should have their chances limited by poverty. This year and in the years ahead, I am absolutely committed to delivering real and lasting change and realising our ambition of a fairer and more prosperous Scotland for all. Children only get one shot at childhood and if we want to make good on creating a country that is the best place to grow up, then we need to work in partnership, with commitment and with a pace that will turn the ambition into a reality. None of this will be easy, but the goal of a fairer Scotland is one that is well worth striving for.



## Shaping a transport system that works for everyone



Photo Credit Lewis Clarke

*People on low incomes disproportionately rely upon public transport, yet have been all too often absent from transport-related discussions. Here, Neil Cowan, Policy and Parliamentary Officer at the Poverty Alliance, highlights some of the key transport-related issues faced by people experiencing poverty in Scotland.*

Complaining about the public transport system can be something of a societal past-time, with delays, price hikes and overcrowding being the stuff of conversations around the country on a daily basis. Usually absent from these conversations though – and particularly from the media and political discourse around public transport – has been the many ways in which the issues of transport and poverty are inter-linked and in which people on low incomes are inordinately impacted by ongoing shortcomings in the public transport system.

There are signs that this is changing, though, with Every Child, Every Chance – the Scottish Government’s Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan – explicitly recognising the important role that transport has to play in tackling poverty. So with the Scottish Government’s Transport Bill now being scrutinised by MSPs and with a National Transport Strategy Review – which will map out the direction of Scotland’s

public transport for the next two decades – currently underway, we find ourselves at an opportune moment at which to look at how the transport system can be shaped to help meet the poverty reduction targets set by the Child Poverty Act.

That’s why the Poverty Alliance and Oxfam Scotland – with the support of the Poverty and Inequality Commission - recently staged an event in Glasgow that brought people together to explore their views and experiences of the transport system in Scotland. Attended by 40 members of the Poverty Alliance’s Community Activist Advisory Group and participants in Oxfam’s Future Skills project, the vast majority had experience of poverty and were able to highlight not only the transport-related challenges faced by people on low incomes, but also their ideas on how we can create a transport system that works for everyone in Scotland. So what did they tell us?



## Shaping a transport system that works for everyone

### Affordability

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the issue that received the most focus was affordability. For the people that we spoke to, the high cost of public transport in Scotland – and in particular the high cost of bus fares – represented the single biggest issue they had with the transport system. Particularly for families with children, transport was said to exert significant pressure on household budgets and – with bus fares in Scotland having increased 18% in the last five years alone<sup>1</sup> – this seemed to be a challenge that was only increasing in severity.

We heard about how – for people seeking employment - the cost of transport significantly limits their employment options and opportunities. People that we spoke to who were already in employment told of how the high cost of transport can act to deepen the in-work poverty that they may be experiencing. The discussions echoed the excellent research published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation last year, which found that transport was a significant barrier to employment for many people living in areas associated with low income, with public transport often constraining rather than enabling a return to work, particularly when that work was low paid or insecure<sup>2</sup>.



Photo Credit Lewis Clarke

As well as acting as a barrier to employment, the high cost of transport meant that many people reported being unable to access – or at least finding it challenging to access – essential services that they relied upon. This was said to be particularly pronounced for people in the asylum system, for example, who are often accommodated a sizeable distance away from the services they need – which tend to be located in the city centre - but for whom the need to access support and services is often significant.

Participants also spoke of the impact that the cost of transport had on the opportunities available to their children. Some spoke of how it limited their children's ability to maintain social connections during school holidays, while others told of how it prevented their children from being able to participate in after-school or extracurricular activities; something that they believed could have a detrimental impact on their educational attainment.

### Availability

As well as issues related to affordability, we heard from some people about the simple lack of transport provision or options in their community and of how the fragmented nature of bus service provision, in particular, often results in areas being poorly connected and in the needs of people on low incomes not being met.

There was discussion, for example, of how in some areas with high levels of poverty, there were no buses to major supermarkets. As a result, people's shopping choices are limited and they are forced into shopping at more expensive, local shops that they are able to access; something that represents the 'poverty premium' in action. A lack of bus service provision in these areas also impacts, it was said, people's ability to access essential services like health, education, training and social security.



## Shaping a transport system that works for everyone

This has a particularly pronounced impact on certain groups.

A number of women spoke of how the lack of bus service provision in their area served to exacerbate the challenges they already face in trying to balance childcare and employment. One participant told of the difficulties she had faced in sustaining her low-paid employment while also relying upon poorly connected and unreliable bus services to travel to and from nursery to drop off and pick up her children. Another participant spoke of how the timing of bus services from their village to the local college (in the nearest large town) meant that young people attending the college were either forced to wait several hours in the town each evening for a return bus or were forced to pay large amounts of money for taxis. For young people from low income families, this made access to the college even more challenging.

### Accessibility

In addition to affordability and availability, people also spoke to us about the accessibility of transport services. The provision of information related to bus services, for example, was said to be extremely poor. With multiple bus companies operating in the same areas and often on the same routes, it can be difficult for many people to access the information – particularly around pricing – that they need in order to make decisions about or plan their journeys in an affordable way. Some participants who spoke English as a second language told of the particular challenges

they faced when trying to obtain accessible information about transport in their community.

### What needs to change?

While the transport-related challenges faced by people on low incomes were numerous, so too are the steps that can be taken to help create a transport system that meets the needs of every community in Scotland. Some of the many proposals discussed at our event included:

- Free and/or expanded concessionary travel, including for people on low incomes (for example anyone with a Universal Credit entitlement).
- Greater regulation of pricing, to ensure consistency of fares across geographical areas and to ensure that people in rural areas, for example, were not forced into paying significantly more for transport.
- Properly integrated ticketing systems, so that people – particularly women with childcare commitments – were not financially disadvantaged for having to make multiple short journeys.
- Increased community involvement in transport planning, with a more participative approach to identifying and addressing gaps in local transport provision to be embedded.

The solutions discussed at our event were many and varied, but there was a shared belief in the need to create a transport system that is planned and delivered in such a way as to actively reduce inequality and tackle poverty, that is cognisant of its role in helping people to access their rights, and which truly does work for everyone.

### FOOTNOTES

1 Transport Scotland, Scottish Transport Statistics: No.36 2017 edition

2 Jim McCormick, Tackling transport-related barriers to work in Scotland, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, August 2018





## 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 benefits 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.