

Poverty in Scotland today

Issues and lessons for community regeneration
policy makers and practitioners across the UK

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Outline of Presentation

Introduction: The making of *Poverty in Scotland 2007*

The character of poverty in Scotland in 2007

Numbers

Trends

Analysing poverty beyond headline statistics and key trends

From research to community action: seven points for community
regeneration policy makers and practitioners

What we must do 1: understand poverty statistics

What we must do 2: understand poverty statistics on the ground

What we must do 3: know your population

What we must do 4: convince people that poverty exists

What we must do 5: convince people that poverty is a problem that must be addressed

What we must do 6: understand the nature of area poverty

What we must do 7: make a difference through local action

Conclusion

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Introduction: The making of *Poverty in Scotland 2007*

This paper draws largely, but not exclusively, from *Poverty in Scotland 2007*, published by the Child Poverty Action Group earlier this year (McKendrick, *et al.* 2007). *Poverty in Scotland 2007* is the fifth in a series of books, which started in 1995 with the aim of making accessible the complexity of poverty statistics, measurements and definitions and, most importantly, identifying what must be done to tackle poverty in Scotland. It is no coincidence that the last two volumes in the series have been published in the months leading up to elections for the Scottish Executive, the devolved government in Scotland. *Poverty in Scotland 2007* was a collaborative effort; the editorial team brought together anti-poverty practitioners from the Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland (John Dickie) and The Poverty Alliance (Peter Kelly) and academics from the Open University in Scotland (Gerry Mooney) and Glasgow Caledonian University (John McKendrick). Most importantly, the final section of the book comprises twelve short essays, each of which outlines what must be done to combat poverty for themes (e.g. Morag Gillespie on financial exclusion), people (e.g. Mhoraig Green and Mick Doyle on asylum seekers) and places (e.g. Stephen Sinclair on Community Planning Partnerships). Appendix One outlines the Table of Contents for *Poverty in Scotland 2007*.

This paper comprises two parts. First, the character of poverty in contemporary Scotland is described. Updating the analysis in *Poverty in Scotland 2007* where necessary, key statistics and underlying trends are described, before comment is made on some of the enduring and emerging traits of poverty in Scotland at the start of the 21st Century. Second, this information base and the reflections of practitioners from the twelve short essays in the second half of *Poverty in Scotland 2007* are used to identify seven action points for community regeneration policy makers and practitioners. It is argued that there is a need to (i) understand poverty statistics; (ii) understand poverty statistics on the ground; (iii) know your population; (iv) convince people that poverty exists; (v) convince people that poverty is a problem that must be addressed; (vi) understand the nature of area poverty; and (vii) make a difference through local action.

The character of poverty in Scotland in 2007

Numbers

One in five people in Scotland – or almost one million people - are living in poverty (990,000 individuals live in a household with an income [after housing costs and equivalisation] below 60% of the median for 2005/06) (Scottish Executive, 2007). The risk of poverty is shared unevenly across age groups with poverty experienced by 24% of children (250,000), 19% of working aged adults (590,000) and 16% of people of pensionable age (150,000). 220,000 people in Scotland are claiming Income Support benefits (November, 2006), with 24,630 claimants supporting a partner and 88,480 claimants supporting one or more children.

Although poverty is prevalent in Scotland, the risk of individuals experiencing poverty in Scotland is lower than that in other national regions in the UK (20%, compared to 21% in England and Northern Ireland and 22% in Wales) (DWP, 2007). In Inner London, one in three people are living in poverty (33%). Rates of poverty are only lower in the English regions of the South East (17%), Eastern (18%) and South West (19%).

Poverty is also distributed unevenly across Scotland. The proportion of the population who are 'income deprived' according to the *Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2006* (Scottish Executive, 2006) ranges from 24.7% in Glasgow to 7.3% in the neighbouring authority of East Dunbartonshire. Most significantly, 52% of Scotland's very most deprived areas (5% most deprived of Scotland's 6505 data zones) are in the city of Glasgow.

Trends

In *Poverty in Scotland 2007*, it was reported that the number and proportion of children and pensioners living in relative poverty had steadily decreased since the late 1990s. However, the most recent Scottish Executive estimates of poverty for Scotland suggest otherwise. Although the medium term trend remains one of reduction in the prevalence of poverty in Scotland and, notwithstanding the folly of over-emphasising the significance of year-on-year statistical change when using sample surveys, it should be acknowledged that no change in the number of children and pensioners living in poverty was reported between 2004/05 and 2005/06, but that the estimated numbers of working aged adults living in poverty rose from 560,000 (2004/05) to 590,000 (2005/06). Indeed, the prevalence of poverty for working aged adults is higher than that experienced in 1998/99 when the current UK poverty targets were set and poverty levels were benchmarked. Thus, it would seem that the progress in reducing the poverty of children and pensioners has, at least, slowed down and that no progress has been made in recent years to tackle the prevalence of poverty among working aged adults.

Analysing Poverty Beyond Headline Statistics and Key Trends

Analysis beyond headline statistics and key trends sheds further insight into the nature of poverty in Scotland. The data used by the Scottish Executive to estimate the numbers living in poverty offer limited potential for more detailed investigation into the nature of poverty in Scotland. It is therefore necessary to either infer Scottish trends from UK data (thereby risking an ecological fallacy in interpretation) or to use alternative Scottish datasets to proxy measures of poverty (such as using the *Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation* referred to above – thereby risking using data which do not strictly measure poverty). Notwithstanding these difficulties, *Poverty in Scotland 2007* reported that:

- Children's risk of poverty increased the higher the number of children in the household; the younger the mother, the younger the youngest child in the household, and if there was one rather than two parents in the family.
- Adults' risk of experiencing poverty increased in households with children (particularly for younger adults).
- Women pensioners had a comparable risk of poverty as men pensioners, although two thirds of pensioners living in poverty were women.

- Risk of living in poverty varied among ethnic groups, with the lowest risk rate being experienced by the 'White' ethnic group for children, pensioners and adults of working age.

These statistics are depressingly familiar as many aspects of poverty in Scotland (and in the UK) are enduring. However, *Poverty in Scotland 2007* also presented less familiar insights into the nature of poverty. For example,

- Adults from households with lower income levels are less likely to give up time to become a volunteer.
- Adults from the most deprived areas in Scotland are marginally more likely than those outside deprived areas to remark that they have "good neighbours".
- More than half of those who earn less than £10,000 per annum have no savings or investments and 15% of those who earn less than £10,000 per annum do not have a bank or building society account.
- Two thirds of those who earn less than £10,000 per annum do not have a car (compared to only 3% of those earning between £30,001 and £40,000). Likewise, the proportions with home Internet access are 17% and 82%, respectively.
- Although poor health is associated with poverty, obesity is lower for men in lower income households (although not for women, levels of obesity are higher in lower income households).
- Area approaches can disguise the prevalence of poverty in rural areas; although almost 10% of people living in 'remote rural' Scotland are 'income deprived', only 0.5% of data zones from 'remote rural' Scotland are among the 15% most deprived areas in Scotland.

Clearly, maintaining a *current* knowledge of poverty is important, whether to confirm existing thinking or to shed new insight into its condition.

From research to community action: seven points for community regeneration policy makers and practitioners

What we must do 1: understand poverty statistics

Measuring poverty is far from straightforward. The number of people who are described as being poor will vary according to how poverty is measured. If using income levels, the number of people defined as living in poverty will vary, for example, according to whether income is calculated *before* housing costs or *after* housing costs, the choice of equivalence measures used to take account of household composition and the level at which the threshold is set for defining poverty. For example, the Scottish Executive (2007) has calculated that, relative to others in 2005/06:

- 880,000 people in Scotland are living in poverty using a *before* housing costs measure, compared to 990,000 using an *after* housing costs measure (*defined also as a household income below 60% median and subject to OECD equivalisation*);
- 250,000 children are defined as living in poverty using the OECD equivalence scheme, compared to 240,000 using the McClements equivalence scheme (*defined also as a household income after housing costs below 60% median*); and

- 60,000 pensioners are living in poverty using a threshold of 50% of the median, compared to 150,000 for a threshold of 60% below median, and 270,000 for a threshold of 70% below median (*defined also as household income after housing costs and subject to OECD equivalisation*).

As the aforementioned examples suggest, the definition of poverty that is used can have a major impact on the estimates. Indeed, these are not the only factors that impact upon the number of people defined as living in poverty, e.g. whether we use an absolute or relative measure of poverty is also important. This complexity is a major barrier to understanding and implies that users must have a basic understanding of statistical concepts. If we are to use poverty data effectively, we must know what they mean.

At the very least, it is important for practitioners to be conversant with the UK government's new three-tier measure of child poverty (Table 1). Tiers one and two are also used to measure poverty among the adult population.

Table 1: UK government's new three-tier measure of child poverty

Tier 1: Absolute low income

Number and proportion of children in households whose equivalised income before housing costs is below 60 per cent of inflation adjusted GB median income in 1998/99. This is a measure of whether the poorest families are seeing their incomes rise in real terms.

Tier 2: Relative low income

Number and proportion of children in households whose equivalised income before housing costs is below 60 per cent of GB median income in the same year. This is a measure of whether the poorest families are keeping pace with the growth of incomes in the economy as a whole

Tier 3: Material deprivation and low income combined

Number and proportion of children that are both materially deprived and are in households whose equivalised income before housing costs is less than 70 per cent of the GB median in the current year. This is to provide a wider measure of children's living standards.

Source: Department for Work and Pensions (2003)

Practitioners must also avail themselves of the key facts and must update their knowledge regularly (at least annually for statistics on poverty). Estimations of the number of people living in poverty change annually, although these changes are not dramatic. Indeed, and as discussed in the *Trends* section of this paper, the conclusions to be drawn on poverty in Scotland in 2007 (using 2005/06 data) are significantly different to the conclusions that were drawn in 2006 (using 2004/05

data). At the very least, all practitioners should use the official measure of poverty to know (i) the number of people living in poverty; (ii) the proportion of people living in poverty; (iii) recent trends in the number of people living in poverty; (iv) differences in the prevalence of poverty among children, adults of working age and adults of pensionable age; and (v) incidence of poverty in their Government Office Region (GOR) and how this compares to other GORs.

What we must do 2: understand poverty statistics on the ground

The official UK government measure of child poverty is largely based on measuring income. To calculate this it uses data from the Family Resources Survey (FRS). The FRS sample size is insufficient to disaggregate findings to neighbourhood levels and local income surveys are not common practice in the UK. Thus, there is not the means to directly compare community incidence of poverty to the official estimations of poverty in GORs, or the UK as a whole.

Although it would be preferable to use the income based measure of poverty to compare local incidence to regional or national incidence, welfare statistics can be used in the absence of such data to provide a robust means of comparison. For example, the *Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2006* defines the proportion of population in a data zone who are 'income deprived' as the total number of adults and children who are supported by Income Support, Guaranteed Pension Credit and Job Seekers Allowance divided by the total population of the area (Scottish Executive, 2006).

However, understanding poverty statistics 'on the ground' is not merely an exercise in utilising the best available data for comparative analysis. Community analysts must also recognise that poverty statistics may not necessarily accurately reflect the prevalence of poverty in their area. As Table 2 describes, official statistics at once overestimate and underestimate the incidence of poverty. Qualitative research has presented evidence that shows how official statistics underestimate poverty (McKendrick *et al.*, 2003). Anti-poverty campaigners may be uncomfortable acknowledging that official statistics are counting as poor some people who do not experience poverty. On the other hand, the media have not been averse to suggesting that poverty is overestimated on account of people who are abusing welfare being wrongly classified as poor (Golding and Middleton, 1982). It is important to acknowledge the ways in which local experiences of poverty are at odds with official measures. It is difficult to ascertain the extent to which these factors undermine official counts and whether, on the whole, this leads to an underestimation or overestimation of poverty.

Poverty must be understood locally and statistics received critically.

Table 2: Underestimation and Overestimation of Poverty by Official Statistics

Some Ways in Which Poverty is Underestimated

Parents/Guardians may divert resources from themselves to provide for their children (exacerbating the poverty of parents/guardians)

Extended family (and friends) may provide financial support and resources in kind to those living in poverty (exacerbating the poverty of extended family/friends)

Acknowledgement of community provision of key services (which are used as indicators of the incidence of poverty) disguises the level of poverty experienced by households

Household debt may reduce the income that is at the disposal of those living in poverty

Claimants do not avail themselves of all benefits to which they are entitled

Over-estimating of income levels in income surveys.

No account is taken of exceptional expenses incurred by those living in poverty (and no adequate provision is made to meet these costs)

Some Ways in Which Poverty is Overestimated

Parents/Guardians may divert resources from themselves to provide for their children (tackling the poverty experienced by children)

Extended family (and friends) may provide financial support and resources in kind to those living in poverty (particularly children)

No acknowledgement of community provision of key services (which are used as indicators of the incidence of poverty)

Accumulated household wealth is used to ameliorate the effects of poverty induced by living on a low income

Household income may be supplemented by income earned in the "hidden economy"

Welfare and tax abuse artificially lowers reported income levels. More generally, under-estimating of income levels in income surveys.

What we must do 3: know your population

Further to the problem that the official UK government measure of poverty does not disaggregate to the community level, is that the sample size and survey design of the FRS does not allow the poverty of some key groups to be estimated. For example, the FRS does not furnish an understanding of the poverty experienced by asylum seekers, migrant workers from the old Soviet republics within the European Union or refugees. Official poverty statistics hold less value to practitioners and policy makers whose communities comprise a high proportion of groups whose living circumstances are inadequately addressed by the FRS.

Regeneration practitioners must know their population as the nature of local poverty varies markedly, as Table 3 demonstrates for four Regeneration Outcome Agreement areas in Scotland. Three points are of note.

Table 3: Selective Profile of Four Regeneration Outcome Agreement Areas in Scotland

	Scotland	Soroba	Rankinston Sinclairston Rural	Stevenston	East Calton East End
Place/Local Authority	--	Oban / Argyll	East Ayrshire	North Ayrshire	Glasgow
Income Deprived (%)	14	17	18	28	33
Population	5,094,800	836	632	3,489	36,469
Pop. Share: Child	18	30	21	22	17
Working Age Adult	63	59	62	61	62
Pensionable Age	19	11	17	17	22
(i) Workless: 16-19	8	6	0	20	18
20-24	13	19	16	36	25
25-49	14	17	21	34	41
50-Pension Age	20	15	38	43	57
(ii) Low weight births	25	30	0	26	49
(iii) Maths, S4 Boys	164	58	172	123	120
Band A Dwelling (%)	23	1	64	67	46
House, Mean Price	135,679	50,378	147,628	51,098	78,452

Sources: Various, drawn from Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics (www.sns.gov.uk). All data from 2005, unless indicated in Notes.

Notes: (i) Workless Class Groups for third quarter of 2005. (ii) Low weight singletons per 1000 live births, 2001-2003. (iii) Average tariff score

First, the incidence of poverty varies across localities. Using the measure of 'income deprived' referred to earlier and drawn from the *Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2006*, some 'poor areas' have an incidence of poverty only marginally above the Scottish mean (e.g. 17% of the population of Soroba, compared to 14% for Scotland as a whole), whereas other areas have an incidence more than twice the Scottish average (e.g. 28% for Stevenston).

Second, the proportion of the local population who are at higher risk of poverty varies across localities. This is evident in Table 3 in the proportion of children and pensioners among the local population. Thus, while child poverty is likely to feature

more prominently in Soroba than Calton/Glasgow East End (children comprising 30% versus 17% of the whole population), pensioner poverty is more likely to be an issue in Calton/Glasgow East End (the proportion of adults of pensionable age among the population is 22%, compared to 11% in Soroba). More striking differences are evident elsewhere in Scotland. For example, the Callendar High Flats ROA area in Falkirk comprises 75% pensioners and less than 1% children, compared to the Northfield ROA area of Aberdeen which comprises 37% children and 7% pensioners. It also follows that the nature of poverty will differ reflecting population composition.

Finally, the problems associated with poverty (not unrelated to the population composition, of course) vary significantly across localities. As Table 3 reports, while high levels of worklessness is a problem for all age groups in Stevenston and Calton/Glasgow East End, more complexity is evident in Rankinston/Sinclairston (increasingly a problem for older age groups) and Soroba (less of a problem for the youngest and oldest age groups). Achievement in school seems to be less of a problem than in Scotland as a whole for boys in Rankinston/Sinclairston, but much more of a problem in Soroba. Accessing the housing market – a means to accumulate wealth as a bulwark against future poverty – may be more of a realistic proposition in Soroba and Stevenston, than it is in Calton/Glasgow East End and, in particular Rankinston/Sinclairston.

The general conclusion is that poverty is not a universal experience. Poverty is experienced in different ways in different localities. The importance of a community perspective in understanding and responding to local poverty should not be underestimated.

What we must do 4: convince people that poverty exists

If communities are to respond to the problem of poverty, then the existence of poverty must first be acknowledged. However, it cannot be assumed that people in Britain think that poverty exists. Earlier this year, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) sponsored a study of attitudes toward poverty based on an analysis of the British Social Attitudes Survey (Park *et al.*, 2007). Just over two in every five respondents thought that there was “very little” poverty in Britain today (41%). Thus, a substantial proportion of people in Britain do not perceive poverty to be widespread.

Park *et al.* also found that there is not widespread support for an interpretation of poverty that extends beyond basic needs. Fewer than one in five respondents agreed that “someone in Britain is in poverty if they had enough to buy the things they really needed, but not enough to buy the things most people take for granted” (19%) and fewer than half of the respondents agreed that “someone in Britain is in poverty if they had enough to eat and live, but not enough to buy other things they needed” (47%). In contrast, the vast majority of respondents agreed that “someone in Britain is in poverty if they had enough to eat and live without getting into debt” (90%). Thus, a substantial proportion of people in Britain have an austere understanding of poverty.

'Liberal' attitudes toward poverty were associated with having experience of poverty, receiving most income from benefits, being unemployed, and heading a lone parent family. Thus, community practitioners may encounter more liberal attitudes toward poverty in their localities than is characteristic of the population as a whole. However, what is clear is that it cannot be assumed that poverty is acknowledged to be a problem.

What we must do 5: convince people that poverty is a problem that must be addressed

Not only must communities acknowledge that poverty exists, they must also acknowledge that poverty is a problem that must be addressed. Park *et al.*'s analysis also highlights that people in Britain are not convinced that poverty is a problem that must be addressed.

When asked to identify which of four possible causes of poverty most closely reflects their own thinking, fewer than one in five identified "social injustice" as being the main cause of poverty (19%). Fatalistic reasons were more popular – 32% perceiving it to be "an inevitable part of modern life" and 13% perceiving the poor to be "unlucky". More than one quarter of respondents attributed poverty to "laziness or lack of will power" among the poor (28%). Thus, public understanding of the reasons for poverty does not lend itself to a public policy programme intervention strategy to overcome poverty in Britain. People must be convinced that poverty is a problem that should be addressed.

On a different tack, one further reason for giving greater priority to tackling poverty is to counter the erroneous train of thought that rising affluence and general progress in the standard of living in the UK is already reducing poverty. That is, there is no need to strengthen attempts to tackle poverty as it is already on the demise in the UK. However, as discussed in the *Trends* section of the paper, recent evidence from 2007 in Scotland would tend to suggest that year-on-year progress in reducing the numbers and proportion of people living in relative poverty cannot now be assumed. If poverty is to be reduced, then new steps to tackle poverty must be initiated.

What we must do 6: understand the nature of area poverty

The nature of area poverty will be outlined more eloquently and comprehensively by Professor Fitzpatrick in the paper that follows, however, in specifying an agenda for regeneration practitioners, it is important to note that the nature of area poverty (in addition to understanding the incidence of poverty in areas) must also be appreciated. Poverty is not only a problem born by individuals, families or households. One example should suffice.

Poverty places a collective financial burden on the community. For example, in many schools it is common practice to protect children whose parents do not contribute toward the cost of school outings by not excluding them from outings on the grounds of parental non-contribution. This safeguard is welcome as it prevents discrimination against children living in poverty. However, someone must still meet the costs; in effect this implies higher parental contributions from those who are able to pay, or for all children to bear the cost through a more restricted programme of

out-of-school outings. As parental fund-raising plays an increasingly important role in the funding of such activities in schools throughout the country, it is inevitable that children of poorer communities will suffer through the inability of the wider community to contribute financially. All children from poor communities will suffer from the consequences - not only children from poor families.

What we must do 7: make a difference through local action

Some of the foremost thinkers and most well-respected figures in anti-poverty work have been less than favourably inclined toward area based interventions. For example, Professor Peter Townsend identifies a fundamental deficiency inherent within area-based approaches:

(Areas or Communities) functions and distribution of prosperity are in the main decided externally. The pattern of inequality within them is set nationally, and the area variations in the extent of poverty arise through ... variations ... and deviations from the national ... It is the national structure of unequal resource allocation ... which primarily explains area deprivation. National action to remedy poverty ... is implied. (Townsend, 1979, p.525)

It is, of course, correct to assert that the primary poverty generating processes are not confined to, or unique to, specific locales. It is also correct to assert that economic circumstance (resource allocation) is the key determinant of poverty. Nevertheless, there are some problems in this line of argument developed by Townsend. First, there is the strategic issue of anti-poverty action. While local action may not always be able to address the root cause of poverty, there is much useful work that can be done to lessen its impact and to prepare poor citizens for a life beyond poverty. Some would argue that this is superficial, or indeed, that it is counter-productive given that such ameliorative action deflects attention from attacking the root cause of poverty. In contrast, local anti-poverty activists would argue that it is better to *do something*. This polemic between holding out for a comprehensive solution (structural change) on one hand, and undertaking piecemeal ameliorative action on the other (revisionist action), may be irresolvable. However, it is interesting to note that structuralists' concern that revisionist action can weaken the resolve for more fundamental change is recognition that revisionist action does help tackle some of the problems generated by poverty. Providing that the local activist recognises that such revisionist action is partial and localised, and that their intervention may not solve the underlying problem of poverty-generating mechanisms, then local intervention can be defended as a viable policy intervention.

Furthermore, there is now ample evidence of national government using local action to tackle poverty. In Scotland, *Closing the Opportunity Gap* (CtOG) is the Scottish Executive's comprehensive anti-poverty strategy, which operates at three levels. The ultimate aim of CtOG is to prevent poverty, provide routes out of poverty and to enable people to live poverty-free lives. Six CtOG Objectives were announced in July 2004, and 10 CtOG Targets were announced in December 2004 (Table 4). CtOG is implemented locally with target populations defined geographically, socially, by a combination of social and geographical traits and by institutions. For example, Target J focuses on the 'most deprived neighbourhoods' (geographical); Target B focuses on 16-19 year olds who are NEET (socially); Target A focused on the workless in seven Local Authority areas (society-in-place) and Target C focuses on an institution (NHS Scotland). Furthermore, several of the target populations are

defined by multiple traits, e.g. Target H focuses on remote and disadvantaged rural areas. Through CtOG, the Scottish Executive is acknowledging that local interventions (albeit coordinated through a national framework) can effect positive change in tackling poverty.

Table 4: Closing the Opportunity Gap Targets

- A **Reducing economic inactivity in the areas of highest economic inactivity** (number of workless people dependent on DWP benefits in Glasgow, North & South Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire & Inverclyde, Dundee, and West Dunbartonshire by 2007 and by 2010)
- B **Reducing the proportion of 16-19 year olds not in education, employment or training** (by 2008)
- C **Public sector and large employers to tackle aspects of in-work poverty by providing employees with the opportunity to develop skills and progress in their career** (NHSScotland will set an example by providing 1000 job opportunities, with support for training and progression once in post, between 2004 and 2006 to people who are currently economically inactive or unemployed)
- D **Tackling a significant aspect of health inequalities** (reduce health inequalities by increasing the rate of improvement for under 75 Coronary Heart Disease mortality and under 75 cancer mortality (1995-2003) for the most deprived communities by 15% by 2008)
- E **Providing an integrated package of support for the most vulnerable children** (By 2008, ensure that children and young people who need it have an integrated package of appropriate health, care and education support)
- F **Improving educational attainment at age 16 for the lowest attaining pupils across the country** (Increase the average tariff score of the lowest attaining 20 per cent of S4 pupils by 5% by 2008)
- G **Improving educational outcomes for looked after children** (By 2007 ensure that at least 50% of all "looked after" young people leaving care have entered education, employment or training)
- H **Improving access to high quality services in rural areas** (By 2008, improve service delivery in rural areas so that agreed improvements to accessibility and quality are achieved for key services in remote and disadvantaged communities)
- J **Tackling community regeneration by improving local infrastructure in the most disadvantaged communities** (by 2008 in employability, education, health, access to local services, and quality of the local environment)
- K **Reducing the risk of financial exclusion and multiple debt for low income families** (By 2008 increase the availability of appropriate financial services and money advice to disadvantaged communities)

Source: McKendrick, *et al.* (2007b)

The new 'deprivation indicators' which are used in conjunction with income levels to measure child poverty also afford opportunities for locally oriented interventions to tackle poverty. Table 5 outlines the indicators which are now used to estimate material deprivation among children. For each indicator, survey respondents are asked whether they (i) have it (ii) would like it, but cannot afford it the moment (iii) do not want/need it. Although these are indicators, which have been selected because they are reflective of a broader experience of deprivation, it would be possible for local projects to directly tackle some of these specific deprivations, e.g. through provision of opportunity for low-cost no-cost leisure in the community.

Table 5: Material Deprivation Measures for Child Poverty in the UK

Adult deprivation

Keep your home adequately warm

Two pairs of all-weather shoes for each adult

Enough money to keep your home in a decent state of repair

A holiday away from home for one week a year, not staying with relatives

Replace any worn out furniture

A small amount of money to spend each week on yourself, not on your family

Regular savings (of £10 a month) for rainy days or retirement

Insurance of contents of dwelling

Have friends or family for a drink or meal at least once a month

A hobby or leisure activity

Replace or repair broken electrical goods such as refrigerator or washing machine

Child deprivation

A holiday away from home at least one week a year with his or her family

Swimming at least once a month

A hobby or leisure activity

Friends round for tea or a snack once a fortnight

Enough bedrooms for every child over 10 of different sex to have his or her own bedroom

Leisure equipment (for example, sports equipment or a bicycle)

Celebrations on special occasions such as birthdays, Christmas or other religious festivals

Play group/nursery/toddler group at least once a week for children of pre-school age

Going on a school trip at least once a term for school-aged children

Source: Department for Work and Pensions (2003)

Conclusion

This paper has described the character of poverty in Scotland today. Poverty is prevalent and evidence is emerging that the consistent progress over the last decade in reducing the number of people living in poverty has stalled. Poverty does not befit any progressive nation, region or community at the turn of the 21st Century. Poverty is a problem that should be addressed.

Community oriented policy makers and practitioners have an important role to play in tackling poverty and improving the quality of life among those who experience poverty. It is argued that the community activist must (i) understand poverty statistics; (ii) understand poverty statistics on the ground; (iii) know their population; (iv) convince people that poverty exists; (v) convince people that poverty is a problem that must be addressed; (vi) understand the nature of area poverty; and (vii) make a difference through local action.

Poverty is too important an issue to be left to the Treasury or Whitehall. Effective anti-poverty interventions can be implemented at the local level and these interventions need not only deal with ameliorating the symptoms of poverty; local initiatives can strike at the root causes of poverty to enable people experiencing poverty to lead poverty-free lives.

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Appendix One – Table of Contents, *Poverty in Scotland 2007*

Section One: Introduction

- 1 Poverty and anti-poverty policy: continuity and change

Section Two: The Nature of Poverty in Scotland

- 2 Definitions, measurements and incidence of poverty
- 3 Factors leading to poverty
- 4 Groups vulnerable to poverty
- 5 Living in poverty

Section Three: Combating Poverty

- 6 Combating poverty: tackling poverty through the policy, practice and provision of services

Issues

- 7 Financial inclusion
- 8 Tackling income poverty through local taxation
- 9 Poverty and employability: a problem drug use perspective
- 10 Poverty and health

People

- 11 Child poverty
- 12 Lone parent families
- 13 Childless adults
- 14 Addressing poverty in Scotland from an antiracist perspective: impact on visible Minority Ethnic communities
- 15 Asylum seekers

Places

- 16 Community responses to poverty: poverty, childcare and mothers' transitions to work
- 17 Community Planning Partnerships
- 18 Rural poverty

Section Four: Conclusion

- 19 Conclusions

Appendix One: Legislative diary