What is the story we have been told about poverty? For many years (and not just since 2010) we have heard repeatedly that those who find themselves living in poverty are there as a result of a lack of desire to find work, or that they have become dependent on ‘hand outs’ from the state. We have been presented with images of communities where the curtains in many homes are always closed in the morning as others head out to work, of individuals who can’t move themselves from the couch, or whose main goal in life appears only to cheat the benefits system. Stories of three generations that have ‘never worked’ pervade political debates about what to do with the ‘problem’ of welfare spending. These stories are just that – stories. They may be works of fiction in most cases, but they certainly do provide good copy. People love to read about a villain and there can be far fewer villains at the moment than the welfare cheat that is lifting the money almost directly from the pocket of the hard working taxpayer.

As the articles in this edition of SAPR highlight in so many different ways, these stories are not based on any facts or evidence and often stand in direct contradiction to the research evidence that is available. Carla McCormack and Lucy Devlin show that whilst a third of people in Scotland believe that alcohol and drug misuse is the primary cause of poverty, the reality is that poverty affects around 20% of people whilst less than 5% have an alcohol or drug dependence. Suzanne Hall from Ipsos-Mori highlights that 28% of people believe that we spend more of JSA than on pensions, which is the complete opposite of the truth. However, if you were reading large parts of the mainstream media or watching shows like ‘Benefits Britain’ you would be forgiven for believing that this was case.

So what do we do about this? As people who campaign for social justice, as regular readers of SAPR undoubtedly are, it is not good enough to wring our hands and complain about how terrible and misguided some people’s views are, or how the media is all to blame for turning people against the welfare state. It is vital that we engage with these issues, challenging them where necessary and laying the basis for a more realistic understanding of the complexities of poverty. The articles in this edition should give us real hope for change. The experiences of the See Me campaign in Scotland show how we can tackle head on the attitudes that underpin the stigma that many people with mental health issues experience. They have responded to negative stories in the media, have used the arts to promote discussion, and are engaging with employers. There is much that campaigners against the stigma associated with poverty can learn from See Me. Similarly, the approach taken by the Glasgow Poverty Leadership Panel provides important lessons. The development of that work, which the Poverty Alliance has been proud to be part of, has shown that challenging stigma and changing attitudes is about far more than changing the tone of some media articles. It is about changing what we do ourselves, how we engage with the communities we serve, how we talk about the problems that we seek to tackle, and how we engage with those we are intending to help.

It is vital that those of us campaigning against poverty take more seriously the need to engage with the negative and discriminatory ideas that many people have. As See Me and the Poverty Leadership Panel have shown, people who have direct experience of poverty need to be central to how we do that. As the Poverty Alliance and our members take forward the Stick Your Labels campaign we will ensure that the views and experiences of those in poverty are at the heart of what we do. In doing this we, and other anti-poverty organisations, need to remember Suzanne Hall’s point that we need to engage with the ideas that people actually have, rather than the ones we wished they had. It is only by meeting head on the often contradictory ideas that so many people have that we will build a real movement to end the discrimination and stigma that many people in poverty experience.

Peter Kelly
Director
The Poverty Alliance
Scotland needs a payrise

In this comment piece, Unison’s Dave Watson looks at the growing inequality between the have and the have-nots, and growth of in work poverty.

The classic exam question starts with ‘contrast and compare’. In recent weeks on the poverty front we have had plenty of source material to answer this question. Ahead of the Davos gathering, Oxfam calculated that the combined wealth of the richest 1 per cent will overwhelm that of the other 99 per cent of people next year. A staggering statistic on global inequality.

Then we got a better understanding of how the rich get richer with the HSBC tax dodging scandal. There were 1,046,398 sanctions, or financial penalties, imposed on Jobseeker’s Allowance claimants in 2013. Five years ago HMRC got the HSBC data there has been one prosecution. The penalties for tax evasion remain lenient while the sick and disabled are humiliated by work capability assessments and Jobcentre staff are put under pressure to meet sanction targets.

For workers on PAYE there are no opportunities to dodge tax on their meagre wages. Since David Cameron became Prime Minister the average wage is worth nearly £2,000 less, the worst fall in living standards since Queen Victoria was on the throne.

In the TUC’s Fair Pay Fortnight we have been making the case that Britain really does need a pay rise. We start by pointing out that more than half of those forced to claim benefits are the very ‘strivers’ that Cameron claims to represent. 52% of working age adults in poverty were living in the households where at least one adult was in employment, as were 59% of children in poverty.

This has happened because the economy has seen a big shift from wages to profits. If the wage bill had just kept up with inflation there would be £5bn more spending power in the Scottish economy.

Falling petrol prices may deliver a cut in the headline inflation rate, but it only masks the real pressures on families and finance. Since 2007 the average rent for a Council House has increased by 28% and in the same time the wages of a Council Worker has increased by 8.3%. UNISON Scotland has published a series of reports in our ‘Damage’ series in which members describe in their own words the impact of low wages on them and their family.

Families have been plugging the gap by using savings or getting into debt. 30% of families say they have less than £500 put away, compared with just 14% in 2013. The scariest chart from the OBR report on the Chancellor’s Autumn Statement shows just how much Osborne is relying on household debt to dig us out of the economic mess he has created. The last time this happened we ended up with the longest and deepest recession ever.

Even amongst those suffering, the pain is not evenly spread. Women in low pay have a pay gap of 34.2% and young workers classed as low paid has more than tripled over the past four decades.

In contrast, the wealth of the richest 1,000 people in Britain doubled to £519 billion since 2009, about two and a half times the annual deficit. FTSE 100 Directors had a 21% pay rise last year and now earn 123 times the average Scottish full time worker. In 2000 that ratio was 40 times. David Cameron was making a somewhat belated pay rise pitch to the British Chambers of Commerce last week. In a TV reaction interview after the speech, one such fat cat couldn’t stop laughing at the notion.

The contrast between the haves and the have nots could not be clearer. Austerity economics is the cause of growing economic inequality. That’s bad for our society and the wider economy. Scotland needs a pay rise.

Dave Watson, Scottish Organiser
Unison Scotland

A taxing question, how to help tackle inequality?

Oxfam Scotland’s Ryan McQuigg explores the need to end tax avoidance and the need to build societies that work for all of us, and not just for a wealthy and powerful minority

Benjamin Franklin once said: “In this world nothing is certain but death and taxes.” It seems a wealthy minority is doing its best to prove him wrong on both counts.

They may not yet have found a way to cheat death, but wealthier people live longer and healthier lives compared to people from poorer economic backgrounds. According to Audit Scotland the average healthy life expectancy of people living in the most deprived areas in 2009-10 was around 18 years lower than people living in the least deprived areas.

Meanwhile, some within this wealthy elite are working to disprove Franklin’s other certainty: the duty to pay tax. They have become ever more masterful at dodging their fair dues by manoeuvring through the labyrinth of lax tax rules and by deploying financial secrecy to dodge tax. Recent news revelations for example, regarding HSBC’s Swiss banking arm allege it helped wealthy customers dodge taxes and conceal millions of euros in accounts up to 2007.

Meanwhile, recently leaked documents have shown global firms – including household names in the UK – channelling nearly £140 billion through the European tax haven of Luxembourg from 2002 to 2010 in order to cut their tax bills. And as recently as April 2014 a National Audit Office report revealed more than 400 of the 800 largest businesses in the UK paid less than £10 million in corporation tax in the 2012-13 fiscal year and around 160 paid no corporation tax at all.

Some might say tax dodging doesn’t harm anyone, so what’s the problem, why care?

In a just tax system everyone pays their fair share – each according to their means. If wealthy individuals and corporations do not pay the tax that they should, governments everywhere are deprived of the vital revenues they need to invest in public services like health and education that can help to fight poverty.

And it is also clear that inequality – which is already extreme and rising – increases when tax rules are unfair with the poorest, at home and abroad, suffering the most.

Around 13 million people, including 3.7 million children, live below the poverty line in the UK. Here in Scotland, according to the latest Government figures 420,000 people were classified as living in poverty in 2012/13. Globally, over 1 billion people still live in extreme poverty – on less than $1.25 per day – and, across poorer countries, 57 million children still miss out on primary school education with an estimated 1 billion of the world’s poorest people still denied the health services they so badly need. Estimates suggest developing countries could be losing out on as much as £160 billion a year in potential revenue due to tax dodging. This is crucial revenue that could be used by governments in developing countries to fund vital public services as well as other measures to help reduce poverty and to support development.

At a time when so many governments’ budgets are stretched, forcing hard spending choices, the case for tackling tax dodging is overwhelming. That is why Oxfam supports the Tax Dodging Bill Campaign whose aim is to bring about bolder and broader action against corporate tax dodging. The proposed Bill would bring in at least £3.6 billion in additional revenue for the UK, and billions more for poorer countries. We want all political parties to demonstrate their strong commitment to this issue by pledging to introduce a Tax Dodging Bill at Westminster in the first one hundred days after May’s General Election. As polling day approaches, Oxfam is urging people to sign up to this campaign because we know clamping down on dodging is one way to start addressing extreme and growing inequality which, on current trends, will see the richest 1 per cent own the same wealth as the rest of the global population combined in just two years time. Unless we tackle the inequality crisis, we’ll never win the fight against poverty.

Faced with such figures it is easy to become despondent. But, as this edition of the Review focuses on attitudes to poverty and inequality, there is some room for optimism. In recent times we have heard many welcome signs of unexpected voices – ranging from the International Monetary Fund to billionaires like Warren Buffet – backing action to tackle inequality.

We clearly have a way to go to turn this into action. But we can start by ensuring everyone pays their fair share of tax. After all, there can be no sustainable end to poverty and suffering unless we build societies that work for all of us, and not just for a wealthy and powerful minority.

Just as one shouldn’t fear death, one shouldn’t fear paying their fair share of tax.

Ryan McQuigg, Oxfam Scotland

INTERNATIONAL COMMENT

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Just as one shouldn’t fear death, one shouldn’t fear paying their fair share of tax.

Ryan McQuigg, Oxfam Scotland
Jim Hume, Liberal Democrat MSP, looks at the challenges facing Scotland today and the stigma for those living in poverty. He argues that there is no quick fix, and we need to face these challenges together.

Negative attitudes to people struggling to make ends meet are not a new phenomenon. Programmes like Benefits Street are just the latest example of how people living below or close to the poverty line can be misrepresented in the media. Sensationalist reports of families receiving benefit payments continue to skew attitudes towards poverty in a way that is neither accurate nor helpful.

The truth is that families living in poverty do not want to be there. We should never lose sight of that fact. And as we challenge lazy stereotypes we need to ensure that helping people out of poverty remains at the top of the political agenda. Stigma can be described as a symptom of poverty. We must not forget that poverty itself is the cause.

As health spokesman for the Scottish Liberal Democrats, I see the impact of poverty every time new statistics reveal glaring inequalities in life expectancy and risk of serious illnesses.

People living in the most deprived areas of Scotland are more likely to smoke. They are more likely to be admitted to hospital with an alcohol-related condition. Children born in these areas are more likely to have a lower birthweight, poorer dental health, or to be obese. Evidence shows that parental health has a direct impact on the length of time that children living in poverty stay there.

We see it first hand in communities where children living in poverty do worse at school than their better off contemporaries.

Education is not simply a way to increase our understanding of poverty and tackle the stigma that still surrounds those struggling to make ends meet. It is a way to break the cycle of poverty that can stop families getting on in life and of giving people the opportunity to improve their circumstances.

This process starts early. We know that providing children with quality early years education can have huge benefits to them later in life. This is why Liberal Democrats in government have made expanding the number of children eligible for free care from the age of two a big priority. In Scotland, we have pressed the Scottish Government to follow suit.

We have also pushed for the reversal of cuts to college funding that have seen 140,000 student places lost in the last five years. This includes a huge number of part-time courses. We know that these courses have been of particular benefit to women and other groups who have traditionally been underrepresented in further and higher education.

Parental qualifications is one of the factors that has a substantial impact on how long a child living in poverty will remain in poverty. We also know that poor children are more likely to grow up to be poor adults, with educational attainment a key measure. The lesson here is clear: We need to be making it easier for people in poverty to gain new skills, not more difficult.

Once people have skills we also need to ensure that they can use them. This means building a strong and stable economy to ensure that jobs - and properly paid jobs - are available to all those who need them. Since 2010, Liberal Democrats in government helped businesses have helped create 170,000 new jobs in Scotland. At the same time we have increased the tax threshold to give ordinary working Scots an £800 income tax cut. The fact that wages are again rising faster than inflation is welcome news too.

I want to see more people in Scotland feel the benefit of this tax cut which means getting more people into work.

No-one on any side of the political debate is pretending that there are quick fixes to ending poverty in the UK. There is no one solution to this problem. Tackling the problems of poverty will take time - as will changing attitudes towards those living below the poverty line. We need to face these challenges together.

Jim Hume, MSP

What works in winning over the sceptics? Changing attitudes toward people experiencing poverty in Scotland

Dr John McKendrick of Glasgow Caledonian University argues that we need to make it more readily available and accessible snapshots of those everyday experiences and realities of living a life with poverty if we are ever to tackle stigma.

Tackling stigmatising attitudes toward people experiencing poverty is an integral part of anti-poverty work in Scotland. This aspires for a virtuous circle in which (positive) actions are sought to change attitudes, which, in turn, will lead to positive actions being undertaken to tackle poverty. Put simply, if more of us understood the reality of poverty, we would be more likely to support and then undertake work to tackle it. Implicit in this thinking is the need to win over the hearts and minds of those who are currently unconvinced of the need for strong action to tackle poverty.

In my day-job, I deliver an ‘introduction to social science’ to 650 first year undergraduate degree students, studying Business-related subjects at Glasgow Caledonian University. This is an eclectic mix of UK and European students, studying subjects as diverse as accountancy, fashion business, law, risk management, events management and the like. Not, one might think, a natural consistency to support anti-poverty activity. In the module, there is a strong emphasis on reflective learning, with students initially asked to complete an introductory survey, which they ‘revist’ throughout the year (part of which canvassed their opinions on poverty in Scotland). They are also tasked to complete a weekly independent learning exercise.

One recent exercise asked students to watch CPAG’s “People Like Us” video and a Metro video and associated news article that described the case of a “benefits cheat”. The former was sympathetic to people experiencing poverty, while the latter was imbued with stigmatising language. Students who considered themselves to have had a firm opinion on welfare spend were then asked ‘to what extent did the resources reinforce or challenge your original thinking?’, while those with no fixed opinions were asked “of the resources did you find most persuasive?” Just over one-third reported that they had no fixed opinions beforehand (36%), with virtually all of these reporting that they were most persuaded by the ‘People Like Us’ video. On reflection, the effectiveness of the CPAG video was attributed to:

- Hearing the voices of people experiencing poverty (When watching the video and seeing a “real person”, it is far easier to relate to, and be sympathetic towards their view as opposed to reading words on a page by a faceless journalist. You can see the true emotion in people’s faces and hear the struggle in their voice. It is this connection with the viewer that makes the video far more persuasive medium than mere words in an article)

- Range of experiences reported.
- Targeting emotion. The video was sad which makes the viewer more assessable to their view, which to me made it more persuasive, although I am still angered by those who abuse the system.
- Claimants putting their children first.
- Explanation for how someone comes to claim welfare / Necessity of the claim. I found the CPAG video more persuasive as it shows that people who are on benefits, for the most part, have to be on benefits.
- It could be you (could happen to anyone). One part of the video that particularly stood out to me was when the first woman highlighted the fact that she had gone from a £27k a year job to relying on benefits and when she stated that welfare cuts can have a profound impact on the children of families on benefits (e.g. not enough money to pay for heating or food)
- Based on shared experience. I found it particularly persuasive as I can sympathize with the fact it is very hard to get a job in the current economic climate and even harder to deal with getting no reply of employers as it took over a year for me to find myself a part time job
- Providing a dimension with which not familiar: You hear of many cases where someone has lied about their health etc to claim more benefits, however you don’t often hear the stories of families that are in actual need of benefits, which the video made me aware of
- Based on interpretation of evidence. As the young woman says, cutting benefits won’t immediately solve financial problems and it will have consequences in the long run e.g. children growing up in bad health, poverty and not being educated will probably find it harder to become healthy and fulfilled adults who can make a living and provide for themselves and their families

Although most students suggested that the ‘evidence’ tended to reinforce their pre-conceptions, a substantial minority were influenced by what they considered. Most importantly, they were swayed by the case presented by anti-poverty campaigners and not by the stigmatisers. Part of the challenge in tackling stigmatising attitudes is making more readily available and accessible snapshots of those everyday experiences and realities of living a life with poverty.

Dr John H. McKendrick, Glasgow Caledonian University
around mental ill health, and explains how the stigma that can be associated with poverty there is much to learn from other campaigns. In this article, Judith Robertson from the See Me campaign explores the prevailing stigma around mental ill health, and explains how the campaign are tackling this.

For those who are attempting to address the stigma that can be associated with poverty there is much to learn from other campaigns. In this article, Judith Robertson from the See Me campaign explores the prevailing stigma around mental ill health, and explains how the campaign are tackling this.

Over the last year there have been some major events that have brought the issue of mental health into the forefront of the public's mind. The death of Robin Williams in August shocked the world, but it also brought a level of discussion on mental health that hadn't previously been seen. What came loud and clear was that mental health is no longer an issue that can be ignored. In the following weeks and months the media was full of stories of people speaking about mental health in a positive way.

As part of our work in the communities we have recruited and trained nine Community Champions. These are activists who identify the problems that exist in their community and take a lead role in tackling them. They will devise and run local campaigns and events which will help to address the specific issues with stigma and discrimination in their area, as well as speaking at public and private events. 

Recently one of our Champions, Richard, took See Me badging projects to employers in Moffat. He gave the badges to people in the workplaces and explained his role as a See Me Champion and the problems with mental health discrimination. After a week the person with the badge passes it on to someone else, and talks to them about mental health in open up the discussion. The other big section of community work is our grants programme. To enable the movement for change to grow we have funded 24 projects all over Scotland which we think can help to tackle stigma and discrimination in specific areas.

These range from awareness raising art projects, to pieces of work which target human rights abuses of people with mental health problems. One project, Just Us, is looking at addressing mental health stigma and discrimination experienced by women in the criminal justice system. The project will address the stigma people put on themselves, by developing participan...
For more information about the See Me campaign visit www.seemescotland.org.

Judith Robertson is programme Director of See Me.

Challenging Discrimination

Challenging public incidents of discrimination like this is one of the major roles we have where we can see an instant change and help to shape future discourse. In May we made a statement, carried in many of the national papers, after Stagecoach boss Branim Soutar used a public speech to make jokes about people with mental health problems. We said the joke was “hurtful and stigmatising” and challenged his views. He made a public apology the following day.

In December we decided to take action when we were made aware that Peterhead FC footballer David Cox had been subject to abusive chants in relation to his dyslexia and attempted suicide, during a match against Stirling Albion.

We contacted both clubs to ascertain what had happened at the match, and contacted the Scottish Football Association to ensure they would be following this up. We then made a public statement with the Scottish Association for Mental Health calling for strong action to be taken and branded the fans behaviour “completely unacceptable” and “highly damaging”. Following the release of the statement, the club chairman Stuart Brown said they would be changing their fans code of conduct, to ensure this type of situation didn’t happen again. He made a public apology on behalf of the club, who also made a donation to SAMH by way of good will and to show they didn’t think these types of actions were acceptable. In June we wrote to the Sunday Times after they printed a column by Professor Adrian Furnham, titled ‘I’m sorry, he’s not a differently gifted worker, he’s a psycho’, which told employers how to spot people with mental health problems and “rid” the workplace of them.

A joint letter, co-signed by Rethink Mental Illness, Mind, and Time to Change and ourselves criticising the article was printed in the Sunday Times. Following this the original article was removed from the website and Professor Furnham wrote an explanation and apology.

Workplaces are one of the main areas where we hear people face stigma and discrimination. Currently we have 600 organisation signed up to the See Me campaign where we can see an instant change and help to shape future discourse for action by government and others in creating a more equal society and shapes the lived experience of those living below the poverty line.

Challenging Discrimination

When considering public attitudes to any social issue it is worth pausing briefly to consider how and why it matters what the public think. After all, our research frequently highlights just how out of step people’s beliefs can be. Take immigration as an example. It’s consistently cited as being one of the most important issues facing the country, currently running in second place to the NHS. However, given the public think that 35% of the population are immigrants (official figures are 13% and even when including estimates that attempt to account for illegal immigration this increases to 18%) it is perhaps little surprise that people believe that immigration is a serious social issue that needs to be addressed.

Nor is this the only example. On average, we think teenage pregnancy is 25 times lower than official estimates; we think 15% of girls under 16 get pregnant each year when data shows it in just 0.6%. We also have a skewed understanding of what government spends its money on; 29% think we spend more on JSA than pensions when in fact the opposite is true (to the tune of 15 times more – the pensions bill is around £74 billion compared to £4.9 billion for JSA). Similarly, 26% think that foreign aid is one of the top 2-3 items that government spends most money on when in reality it only accounts for a fraction of expenditure (1.3% in the 2011/12 financial year).

These misperceptions are the result of the interplay of many different factors; media coverage for one, and mistrust in official statistics another; only 16% trust politicians to tell the truth. But just because what people think is out of kilter – often dramatically so – with the evidence available it doesn’t mean that their views should be ignored. Indeed, when it comes to poverty, understanding what people think and what drives this is essential as it both informs the level of support for action by government and others in creating a more equal society and shapes the lived experience of those living below the poverty line.

Changing views on poverty

So what do people think about poverty? Prior to the financial crisis of 2008, when asked to consider poverty the default position for most was to revert to images of malnourished ‘third world’ children or, if pressed to consider the British context, a bygone age of Dickensian squalor. People failed to see how people in Britain could be poor; with all the opportunities they perceived available to people, plus the help and support that could be sought from the state they assumed poverty had to be the result of bad decision making and poor choices. Individuals were to blame if they were poor, not broader systemic issues.

Recent qualitative research conducted for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, however, suggests that views have softened. Participants spoke about how their neighbourhood had changed; that their high streets are home to payday lenders and that there are foodbanks which are not just regularly but oversubscribed. They coupled this direct experience by referring to what they have been told in the media, like reports of significant cuts to state support. This combined to create a powerful narrative of a country which no longer helps those in need, where people are trapped by circumstance.

As one participant put it: “Every time I go shopping the queue for it [the food bank] is longer. You can’t tell me that all those people want something for free. The look on their faces tells me that’s not true. It’s not what you expect to see in modern day Britain – it’s desperate.” This is reflected in our wider polling data; 16% now cite poverty and inequality as a topic of concern – a figure which has basically tripped since 1998 (to the tune of 15 times more – the pensions bill is around £74 billion compared to £4.9 billion for JSA). Similarly, 26% think that foreign aid is one of the top 2-3 items that government spends most money on when in reality it only accounts for a fraction of expenditure (1.3% in the 2011/12 financial year).

That there are many ‘myths’ about poverty is well known. However, how do we engage with what people actually think about poverty? In this article Suzanne Hall, Research Director at Ipsos MORI’s Qualitative Social Research Unit, looks at what some of their research tells campaigners.
Growing insecurity

Again, this is reflected in wider polling data; only a third rate their current financial situation as strong and, what is more, there is little confidence that things will get better; just one in four believe that, six months from now, their financial position will be stronger. This is in stark contrast to the way that people feel about the state of the economy more generally. Throughout 2014 Ipsos MORI has recorded some of the highest economic optimism scores (the percentage of those who feel the economy will get better, minus the percentage of those who think it will get worse), with an all-time peak of +35 in May. While these scores dipped towards the end of the year, on balance the sentiment is still positive. However, with wages failing to keep pace with economic growth then it is perhaps little surprise that people can be positive about the economic state of the country, while still worrying about what is in their own back pocket.

What’s more, there is a generational aspect to this insecurity. While once an accepted truism, that the next generation will have a better quality of life than the one that went before it no longer holds. Only a third of British adults think that their generation will have a better quality of life than their parents. Breaking these issues down by generation then the picture is bleaker still. While 79% of the pre-war generation think they will have had a better life than their parents, this figure halves to just 42% of Generation Y.

Of course, not all felt like this – if they did then it would be reasonable to assume that the polling figures for the general election would look very different – and in our discussions the issue of the deservingness of some benefits claimants was raised. But a far more pressing issue, and one which will have had a better life than their parents, this figure halves to just 42% of Generation Y. Even with this, the public aren’t convinced that the UK could ever be poverty free and think that, to some extent, inequality will always exist. What they don’t believe, however, is that for those at the bottom that life has to be so hard; the public suggest that, as a society, we can decide what it means to be ‘at the bottom’ and provide people with the opportunities they need to change their lives.

Changing the conversation

However, they do think that it is worth having a conversation about poverty, but it will be important for all those concerned to think carefully about how his is crafted. In the first instance, while there was an appetite for hearing more about poverty it was urged that the word itself is not used. While the experiences of recent years have fostered a more nuanced and sympathetic view of those living below the poverty line, too many still associate the term with absolute poverty. This means that when they hear it applied to a UK context, they disengagement believing that the situation is being overstated to grab their attention.

Secondly, it will be important to engage with the ‘strivers and skivers’ narrative when communicating about poverty. While people know these are caricatures, they also recognise a kernel of truth in these portraits; they don’t want to be told that everyone living in poverty is blameworthy as they simply don’t believe this to be the case. Rather, they want to better understand the circumstances that led to this small proportion behaving like that. To illustrate, participants suggested using a lifecourse narrative to help explain these issues and to demonstrate how a child in poverty – who everyone, unquestioningly felt sympathy with – might turn into an adult in poverty who could be portrayed as feckless and undeserving.

These measures will go some way to getting the public’s attention. But the greater challenge is ensuring that, in an election year where the battle is tighter than ever, that any discussion about poverty does not get lost amid the background noise. The key here will be ensuring that voter priorities - namely the NHS and the economy – are incorporated into a wider debate about what we want the role of the state to be and the importance of a fair economic recovery; that growth, while welcome, should not come at any cost.

Suzanne Hall,
Research Director at Ipsos MORI’s Qualitative Social Research Unit

Ipsos MORI Essex Index. Ipsos MORI interviewed 966 adults aged 18+ between 21st January and 2nd February 2015. Data are weighted to match the profile of the population.

Ipsos MORI. Kings College London and the Reded to the Economy. – Perils of Perceptions. Ipsos MORI interviewed 1015 adults aged 16-74 online between 14th – 21st June 2015. Data are weighted to match the profile of the population.

Ipsos MORI. Understanding attitudes to poverty in the UK: Getting the public’s attention, 2007.
In this article, One Parent Families Scotland’s Marion Davie looks at the stigma facing lone parents, and how little has changed over the past 20 years. The facts rather than fiction show that single-parent families do succeed. Children flourish, develop, and grow, just as they do in a variety of family structures. All families face challenges, and often conflicts between work and family responsibilities. Many of the challenges faced by single-parent families are unique to them, and those faced by all families however single parents have the unique challenge of having sole responsibility of care and household income.

While the moral case for tackling poverty is an overwhelming one, there are also strong economic arguments. The IFS forecasts a massive increase in child poverty with up to 100,000 more children living in poverty in Scotland by 2020 - many of them living with one parent. With the wider cost of child poverty estimated to be around £2bn across the UK, the economic argument for investing in prevention is clear. However welfare reform is robbing our poorest children of a happy childhood. A system which is condemning families to live in penury with a terrible impact on children’s health and wellbeing is not working. The findings from research commissioned by the GCPI and OPFS into the experiences of lone parents moving into paid work as part of the UK government’s welfare reforms makes shocking reading.

"Every time I come out of there I feel suicidal!"

The research team from Edinburgh Napier University found that many lone parents felt pressurised and stigmatised by the current Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) regime. It was clear that many parents were not getting clear and timely information. Many did not know that changes in the benefits rules meant that lone parents, not in work, were only entitled to Income Support until their youngest child turned 18. Some were unaware that moving from Income Support to JSA involved job-search requirements and the possibility of sanctions that might lead to their benefits being stopped.

This current JSA regime is pushing lone parents into applying for and accepting jobs to avoid these new sanctions. There is often an expectation that people claiming JSA are ready to move into work and have no problem with searching and applying for jobs. Many of the parents taking part in this research challenge this assumption. They are often dealing with family circumstances that meant that paid work was especially difficult to find or retain, with some parents reporting physical or emotional health problems or caring for children with health or behavioural issues. The research highlighted that Jobcentre Plus Advisors often do not take into account lone parents’ specific needs, and that the atmosphere when parents attend is often punitive and suspicious.

One Parent Families Scotland (OPFS) is alarmed about the impact of these draconian measures on the health and wellbeing of parents and children. Lone parent families are already almost twice as likely to live in poverty as two parent families. A lack of flexible working, jobs that pay a living wage and affordable childcare means that many are struggling to find stable work that pays. At OPFS, we are concerned that these changes to social security, highlighted in the GCPI commissioned research, will only make lone parents’ lives harder to overcome as well as increasing stigma and judgmental attitudes towards single parents.

Up and down the country, thousands of single mothers and fathers already face extra hurdles when caring for their children. These struggling families must not be hit any harder, especially at a time when support services are being cut and the costs of childcare and housing are rising. The findings from this latest research show that the current UK government’s welfare reforms are failing to move us towards a system that offers dignity and appropriate support to single parents.

An OPFS Freedom of Information Act request to DWP has revealed that over 9,000 lone parents in Scotland were sanctioned over a 12-month period. At OPFS we believe that it is unacceptable that in a rich country we find families where basic needs are not being met, where children go hungry and destitution faces some of our most vulnerable families. The justifications for stigmatising single-parent families are founded largely on myths, myths used to rationalise severely punitive social policies. Children, in increasing numbers, experience the impact of those policies. More than two-thirds of all children will spend some time in a single-parent family before reaching 18 years. The damage done in the name of justified stigma, therefore, harms a great many children.

As JK Rowling says: "I would say to any single parent currently feeling the weight of stereotype or stigmatization that I am proud of my years as a single mother than of any other part of my life."

Many of the challenges facing lone parents today are the very same as those they have faced over the years. The majority are women who become lone parents, from relationship breakdown, separation, divorce and widowhood. Although most lone parents did not choose to bring up their children alone, they still face stigma and prejudice particularly through the way they are presented in the media. Lone parents tell us they are sick of being treated as second rate families. Most do a fantastic a job of bringing up children mainly on their own and want respect not blame.

OPFS is a leading member of The Scottish Campaign on Welfare Reform which promotes 4 key principles that a welfare system should meet: it should be:

Dignified: respect and compassion, valuing unpaid work and caring roles, and recognising the responsibilities of employers and gov’t as well as the public benefits of welfare.

Supportive: lifting people out of poverty, so that all citizens are financially protected, whatever their circumstances.

Well resourced: providing adequate financial and human resources.
resources to ensure the smooth introduction of any reforms. Suitable: taking full account of Scotland’s differing institutional framework from the outset, so that any proposals enabled a joined-up approach to tackling poverty.

Westminster government policy as it stands fails to move us towards such a system. This is the challenge we face - to pressurise government to put in place policies which treat people who live in poverty with dignity & respect. Mitigation is not sufficient. We must challenge a system which is condemning families to live in penury with a terrible impact on children’s health and wellbeing. Now it’s time to say welfare reform isn’t working. Other European countries support much more generous and effective welfare systems and there is no reason why we cannot afford to do likewise.

Marion Davis, Policy & Research Advisor
One Parent Families Scotland

http://opfs.org.uk/spaking-out/current-research/
http://www.gingerbread.org.uk/content/1901/J-K-Rowling

http://opfs.org.uk/spaking-out/current-research/briefing-201410-
human-rights-violence/

One Parent Families Scotland
Marion Davis, Policy & Research Advisor
One Parent Families Scotland

Let’s tackle poverty together

In this article, Louise Falconer and Lorna Wilson from Glasgow’s Poverty Leadership Panel discuss the work that has been done to understand, influence and change attitudes to poverty in Glasgow.

Challenging attitudes, practically

The stigma of being in poverty is not something immediately obvious to a lot of officials when ‘strategising’ about tackling poverty. Financial inclusion, benefits take-up, encouraging the living wage – they are obvious and actionable and the success of any ensuing work is measurable. But when you talk to people with experience of poverty, it is clear that the stigma associated with poverty can be as distressing as the pecuniary difficulties. Glasgow’s Poverty Leadership Panel has a stream of work tasked with 'challenging negatives attitudes to poverty' which is anomalous as far as local anti-poverty strategies go. But the fact that this workstream does exist is due to the core principle underpinning all the Panel’s work – co-production. Right from the inception of the Panel, the identification of its priorities, the drafting of its action plan and now its implementation, we have involved local people and have produced our work in partnership with them. If we hadn’t done so, it’s doubtful the Panel would have seen attitudes to poverty as a priority, and our work would have missed something of huge relevance to so many people in poverty.

The Poverty Leadership Panel

It is coming up to the Poverty Leadership Panel’s second birthday; its inaugural meeting was in May 2013. This first meeting was held in Glasgow’s City Chambers and there was a promising indicator of success before the meeting even started: there weren’t enough seats for everyone who was gathering for the meeting. (We’ve since moved the meetings to bigger quarters!).

The prospective Panel members streamed into the committee room – the Director of Public Health, Glasgow’s Executive Director of Financial Services, the Chair of Faith in Communities Scotland, the Chief Executive of Wheatley Housing Group. The co-chairs, the Leader of the Council and a respected community representative, took their place at the head of the table. Importantly though, there were also around half a dozen people with direct experience of poverty, who had enough faith in the vision of the Panel to put aside their doubts and were prepared to sign up to this joint venture.

These people, and others, had spent the last six months identifying the priorities upon which the Panel would focus its energy. The Panel couldn’t take on everything at once. One of the six priorities put to the Panel was to ‘challenge negative attitudes to poverty’. At that meeting, the Panel agreed to adopt it as part of its strategy which meant the work of making it happen had to begin.

First steps

Because this work was not the usual stuff of local anti-poverty strategies, the first few months of this work were difficult. There was no precedent or template to draw upon. For some time we looked for someone or an organisation who had ‘the answer’. Whilst we certainly learned a lot during those initial months it soon became clear that no one actually did know how to do this. We needed to develop our own approach. So, that’s what we did.

Learning together

We engaged with lots of people! So many people gave their time and energy to this, sharing their unique and valuable knowledge, expertise, and experiences. A number of local and national third and public sector organisations got involved and worked alongside volunteers who have direct experience of struggling against poverty. By bringing people together who wouldn’t otherwise have had the chance to meet, we all gained new perspectives. We learned about what poverty really means for individuals in Glasgow and how negative attitudes about people in poverty create barriers which can have deep and profound impacts. Through a workshop, we agreed two main goals which would direct our work on attitudes –

1. Improving services so they’re as responsive as possible to the needs of people living in poverty
2. Ensuring that we do not stigmatise people struggling against poverty.
These goals are ambitious. But they need to be. And importantly, they are the result of commitment and drive of people with direct experience of poverty, working alongside folk from different organisations in a spirit of mutual respect and collaboration, and with lots of energy and positivity.

What do Glaswegians think?

Having decided that our aim was to make services as responsive as possible to poverty, it followed that staff working in public sector agencies were key to this ambition. Our starting point then had to be the attitudes of staff delivering services. Were their attitudes preventing the delivery or diminishing the quality of services for our residents or were personal opinions immaterial to this? What do our colleagues think about poverty? There was only one way to find out – we needed to ask them.

Glasgow Centre for Population Health, Glasgow City Council and Wheatley Housing Group, plus our volunteers with direct experience of poverty worked together over many months to construct a survey that would start to unravel staff attitudes. The survey asked staff about levels of poverty in the city now and in the future, how they defined poverty, and their views on why some people are living in need. It also asked about experiences of dealing with people living in need, and the issues raised by their customers and clients. Finally, the survey asked how they would respond to discriminatory comments by a colleague or member of the public, and how confident they are in helping vulnerable people.

They sent out electronically and hard copy to staff in Glasgow City Council, Wheatley Group, and Fire and Police Services. The response to the survey was better than we anticipated – 2,750 staff completed the survey, most of whom have regular contact with the public. NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde had recently carried out a similar survey so these results were there for our analysis already.

Survey results

Ninety-six percent of those surveyed think there is either 'not enough money to eat and live, but not to buy other things people take for granted'.

Someone in poverty if they have…

• not enough money to eat and live, but not to buy other things they need.

The majority agreed that people are in poverty if they haven’t got enough money to eat and live without getting into debt. However, only 34% agreed that people are in poverty if they can afford what they really need but not what other people take for granted. It is this understanding of poverty which creates space for us to make judgments about budgetary and consumer choices, such as purchasing a television.

Over half of staff felt that poverty could be explained by structural factors such as injustices in society. Just 13% said it was an inevitable part of modern life. However, we know that poverty is not inevitable – one of our messages would have to be that poverty is not inevitable and that staff have the power and responsibility to make a difference.

Sixteen percent of staff believed poverty was caused by ‘laziness and lack of self-worth’ or because people were ‘unlucky’. Other attributed causes included family influences and addiction issues. These negative attitudes may be a result of individual observations or perceptions based on current media narratives. Whatever the origin though, they point to a need for a systematic approach to supporting staff, by raising awareness of the underlying determinants of poverty and the impact these have on people’s life chances.

The survey also asked staff about the current issues being raised by customers and members of the public. The most common issues relate to benefits, unemployment, and stress and anxiety as a result of finance or employment. Overall, staff are less confident in dealing with people whose first language is not English, people with addiction issues and clients with mental health problems, highlighting a need for joint and shared training and learning across agencies.

When asked to choose from a range of options that would help them support people in poverty, the three most popular options were better access to information or policy on poverty, training events, and access to good practice guidance.

One-third of respondents said they needed hearing or reading about service users’ experiences of poverty.

People Make Glasgow

The findings from the survey were informative in their own right, but we decided they would be used as the foundation for a major anti-stigma messaging campaign for people who work in the key public agencies in Glasgow.

A small group of dedicated people who have direct experience of dealing with stigma, and organisations who have developed successful campaigns, worked together on the materials. We reviewed best practice from across the UK, and compiled a bank of communication, engagement and training materials. The material was reviewed for different groups and from a human rights perspective.

We really wanted this campaign to strike a chord with staff. After the successful use of ‘People Make Glasgow’ during the Commonwealth Games, we were certain this was it. Pulling in the expertise of Glasgow City Marketing Bureau was a coup – they knew exactly how to make this work for us.

A workshop with frontline staff from across all the major agencies shared their success stories and the barriers which stop them making a difference. We got some fantastic ideas for the brand, which we then condensed into the following strapline -

People Make Glasgow Fairer – let’s tackle poverty together.

Using this as our hallmark, the campaign will launch across Glasgow City Council, Wheatley Group and NHS. Responding to the findings from the staff survey, the first messages of this campaign are:

• Myths and attitudes about poverty and the benefits system are widespread and unfair.

• These attitudes need to be challenged if Glasgow is going to tackle poverty together.

• People in poverty in this city need your support to help improve their situation. They are part of the solution.

• Don’t let them down.

The campaign also has a ‘myth busting’ element, by taking some of the negative quotes from the staff survey responses and responding to them. For example -

Quote -

‘You don’t want to work because you are better off on benefits’

Here’s the reality

• Out of every £100 spent from the welfare budget only £4 goes towards the unemployed.

• 8% of the UK population are severely materially deprived - this level is one of the highest in the EU.

• According to the European Social Charter the benefits paid in the UK are inadequate compared to the rest of the EU.

The cumulative impact of the welfare reforms over the six years from 2010 to 2016 could result in the Scottish welfare bill being reduced by around £6 billion.

Real stories are being captured on film – a mix of positive inspirational stories where people in poverty have worked with people from service delivery organisations to change their lives, but also stories where attitudes have proven a real barrier.

This is a long term campaign which will develop and evolve over time in response to external changes, views and feedback.

It will be followed by on line training and information, and face to face learning opportunities across agencies including seminars and formal training. Crucially, there will be an opportunity for staff to meet people who have direct experience of the issues.

To complement the campaign, and to build understanding at the top level of organisations, we have also launched a mutual mentoring programme by matching a senior member of staff with someone who has directly experienced poverty. The Poverty Truth Commission is leading on this aspect of the programme and has paired eight senior leaders with a person who has experienced poverty. They are visiting their home, local areas, places of employment and building one-to-one relationships through discussions. This is enabling shared learning and aims to bridge the gap between the top of the corporate ladder and someone who has struggled with poverty. Early feedback is very positive -

‘It has been a real eye-opener and it is clear that it is a mutual mentoring programme. Darren is a font of information regarding where he feels we should be directing services to and has been able to provide a powerful insight into the realities of how the welfare reforms have affected him and others he knows’. (Senior leader, Wheatley Group)

Top-down, bottom up, infusions of community knowledge and expertise from those who best understand poverty. Our
ambition to tackle negative attitudes to poverty is big, but we think we’ve got many of the necessary ingredients to make it happen.

Conclusion
The great thing about working with people with direct experience of poverty, on something that they feel passionate about, is that it takes your work in directions that you couldn’t have predicted. At its first meeting in May 2013, the Panel didn’t know how the attitudes campaigning work would unfold. It didn’t know that this aspect of its work would become a stellar example of how to co-produce with people in poverty, or that this campaign would increasingly gain recognition for being so unique. But with the campaign about to launch with staff in three of the largest public sector organisations in the city, the Panel has shown what can be achieved with a little bit of creativity, a measure of ambition and a lot of help from partners, in organisations and in our local communities.

Why we all need to Challenge the Stigma of Poverty

Having been quiet for some time now, the Stick Your Labels campaign is taking off again with a new seminar programme and a Parliamentary event May. In this article, Carla McCormack and Lucy Devlin, look at the background to the campaign and what it is seeking to achieve in the next phase.

The Stick Your Labels (SYL) campaign emerged from the Poverty Alliance’s Evidence Participation Change (EPIC) project in 2010 and has focused on tackling public misconceptions regarding poverty and reducing associated stigma. It aimed to provide a useful and effective resource to raise awareness of poverty issues in order to support people to challenge the stigma of living in poverty in Scotland. The desire to launch a campaign came directly from both people who were living on low incomes and policy makers working at the local level. All of those involved in the development of the campaign recognised not only the damage that negative and stigmatising beliefs about poverty had on individuals themselves, but also the barrier that such beliefs represented in making further progress in tackling poverty. In the first phase of the campaign we produced myth busting fact sheets, got the leaders of the main political parties to sign up to our ‘stigma pledges’ before the 2011 elections and carried out a series of workshops on attitudes to poverty.

The campaign is aiming to de-bank a number of myths about poverty, including those surrounding:

- The causes of poverty
- Who lives in poverty
- Who is responsible for tackling poverty
- How the Government’s welfare budget is spent.

The remainder of this article focuses on the facts that help undermine these myths. It is these facts that we will use to build the campaign over the coming year.

The causes of poverty
The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has identified three common narratives on the causes- or “drivers”- of poverty: structural, individual, and cultural.

Structural causes are those related to economic conditions such as the strength of the labour market; individual causes relate to individual behaviours, attitudes, and characteristics; and cultural explanations refer to the idea people are trapped in poverty because of a “culture of worklessness” which is passed down through generations.

While the definition of poverty itself has not changed much over the past thirty years, individual and cultural narratives on poverty have become increasingly popular, with people becoming less willing to identify structural economic or societal causes of poverty. This has manifested in a hardening of public attitudes to poverty, with more and more people wrongly identifying individual behaviours as being the cause of poverty.

Among the most common individual behaviours that the public associate with poverty is substance misuse. In Scotland, a third of people believe that the main reason for child poverty is parents’ dependency on drugs, alcohol or other circumstances; eighty per cent think it is a contributing factor. This assumption, however, is not supported by the evidence. While poverty affects more than 20 percent of the UK population; less than 4.7% of the population experiences drug or alcohol dependence. Furthermore, research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation shows that general patterns of drug and alcohol consumption exhibit little correlation with poverty or social class- problematic drug users and those with alcohol addiction represent only...
a small minority of all people in receipt of out-of-work benefits, and those in work on average consume more alcohol than those who are unemployed. This is not to deny that addiction can contribute to the social exclusion and poverty of those affected or, particularly where individuals belong to marginalised groups such as youth offenders or homeless people, that this impact can be severe. It is, however, to underline that most people experiencing poverty are not affected by drug or alcohol addiction, and therefore that addiction cannot be judged as a major cause of poverty in the majority of cases.

"Cultural" explanations - relating to the idea of a "culture of worklessness" - have also become increasingly popular in recent years. There is a strong belief in Scotland that not wanting to work is the cause of poverty. This is associated with a "culture of worklessness" which is assumed to be the result of generational unemployment. The extent of generational unemployment is frequently overstated. In the entire UK, there are only 15,000 households where two or more generations have never worked and in thirty-five percent of these cases the second generation has been out of education for less than a year. In addition to being inaccurate, the idea of a "culture of worklessness" is also divisive. This myth suggests that people experiencing poverty differ from others in terms of their fundamental values and aspirations. This contributes to a "us" vs. "them" narrative in which people with experience of poverty are accused of having poor values - including laziness or the unwillingness to work - and of not wanting the best for themselves or their children. The pervasiveness of these assumptions is illustrated by the fact that a large number of Scottish people now view "unwillingness to work" as a major cause of poverty, and see those living in poverty as being "lazy" or "benefit scroungers". This is encouraged by overly "generous" benefits levels. It is clear that there is a need to challenge this tendency to blame the victims of poverty, rather than looking at the wider causes. The Stick Your Labels campaign believes that the best way to do this is by informing people about the causes of poverty and ensuring that the facts are heard and myths are not perpetuated. There is a role for Government in this also. We need solutions for poverty in Scotland that are based on proper and evidenced understanding of the issues, not vote-winning populist policies based on myths and misunderstandings.

Who lives in poverty?

The number of people in in-work poverty is growing. In Scotland, 59 per cent of child poverty are in households where someone works. The Centre for Research and Social Policy has calculated the Living Wage to be £7.85 per hour, but in Scotland there are 414,000 people earning below that. Despite this the connection between poverty and low wages remains poorly understood. It is notable that only 8% of Scots surveyed in 2013 identified low wages as being a major cause of poverty, with the stigmatising image of a person affected by poverty continuing to be that of an unemployed person.

Who is responsible for tackling poverty?

It is noticable that, despite an increased focus on individual and cultural causes of poverty, the public broadly continues to recognise the important role of governments in tackling poverty. Three quarters of people in Scotland believe that the Scottish Government has the responsibility of Scottish Government to tackle child poverty. Additionally, when asked about the extent of child poverty, three quarters of people surveyed agreed that the Government should top up the earnings of those who are on low incomes - indicating an awareness among the public that wages are often not high enough to enable people to support their children. In spite of this recognition, however, some in Scotland remain hesitant to make the connection between low wages and poverty and it is disheartening to consider that only twenty percent of Scots believe that local government can be a role in tackling poverty according to recent research. This suggests that while Government is rightly seen to have a strong responsibility for tackling poverty, the responsibility of business is less well understood. The Stick Your Labels campaign will work to challenge this by raising awareness of the responsibility that all employers have to ensure that their employees have enough to live a dignified life.

Spending on welfare

Despite the fact that poverty levels are expected to increase, support for spending on welfare is at all time low and appears to be moving in line with political policy rather than economic circumstances.

In November 2014, the UK Government wrote to tax payers and employers about how their taxes were being used. The letter, written to around 22 million UK taxpayers, broke down unreasonably divided “the taxpayor” from people in receipt of benefits, and used an expansive definition of “benefit claimants” that was likely not be recognised by the general public. By grouping all welfare spend (excluding pensions) under one heading the UK Government encouraged the belief that spending on benefits in particular is being “wasted” or “misused” and is much larger than it really is. Of the money included in this figure was on “personal social services” including spending on elderly care and long term care for the elderly. A significant amount was also directed to pensions for older people other than state pensions. By not offering a clear explanation of what exactly was included in the welfare spend, the UK Government has encouraged misconceptions to grow, which contribute to the stigmatisation of social security.

This stigmatisation has many sources but is “primarily driven by the belief that those who claim benefits are ‘undeserving’”. This belief in the undeserving benefit claimant has increased significantly in the past 20 years. According to the British Social Attitudes survey in 2010, more people agreed than disagreed that “many people who get social security don’t really deserve any help”. Importantly, this shift has not happened organically but is facilitated by the rise in “scrounger’s discourse” which suggests that many in receipt of benefits are either claiming fraudulently or do not deserve them due to some personal circumstance or behaviour. Media accounts play a large role in this discourse, while benefit fraud and customer error combined are estimated to account for a little as 0.5-3% of all claims, stories about benefit fraud represent 30% of all welfare coverage in newspapers. Newspapers and television are not alone in the construction of this discourse, however, with evidence suggesting that the media is strongly influenced by policy developments and by the language employed by politicians. Where our politicians engage in the language of “skivers vs. strivers”, our media often follows, with the result that misinformation on welfare spending continues to spread.

Conclusion

The reach of the Stick Your Labels campaign is part of the Poverty Alliance’s ongoing work to challenge negative attitudes towards people experiencing poverty in Scotland. Attitudes towards poverty and social security have, in certain respects, hardened in recent years and while there are many reasons for this shift the role of political figures and the media in perpetuating the myth of the “undeserving benefits claimant” should not be overlooked. The Stick Your Labels campaign will therefore work to hold politicians to account for their behaviour surrounding the issue poverty, with party leaders in Scotland being asked to sign up to a pledge to reject any attempt to divide society into “strivers” and “skivers”, and to prioritise the fight against in their words and actions.

In addition, the Poverty Alliance will continue to challenge the myth of the “undeserving” claimant through its media work and work with community activists. It is also clear that public attitudes towards people in poverty are affected by the lack of understanding of poverty itself, its relationship to work, and its relationship to social security. The Stick Your Labels campaign will therefore also focus on raising public awareness of poverty and welfare more broadly. In particular, it is our aim to engage young people in the issues surrounding poverty by delivering presentations in schools across Scotland. Finally, it is important to emphasise that public opinion on these issues is neither homogeneous nor immutable - surveys of public opinion regularly report contradictory views on a large number of issues, often held by the same individual. While we might lament, therefore, the high numbers of people who blame individual behaviours for the existence of poverty, we should also acknowledge the continued support for collective solutions and, in particular, for a strong government role in tackling poverty. This illustrates a strong desire within Scotland to see poverty effectively tackled - particularly when individuals are given accurate information on poverty - and it is this desire which the Stick Your Labels campaign will seek to build on.

Carla McCormack and Lucy Devlin


Ibid p.26


Towards Social Mobility and In-Work Poverty.

Ibid p.26


Fiscal Studies http://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/7424


Towards Social Mobility and In-Work Poverty.

Ibid p.26


Fiscal Studies http://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/7424


Towards Social Mobility and In-Work Poverty.
MEMBERSHIP:

JOIN US!

The Poverty Alliance is a national anti-poverty development agency for Scotland which seeks to combat poverty through collaborative action, bringing together workers and activists drawn from the public sector, voluntary organisations, community groups and other agencies. The Alliance's wide range of activities provide many opportunities for members to exchange information and expertise which benefit the anti-poverty movement.

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

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name and designation of contact person: ____________________________________________

Name and address of organisation: ________________________________________________

Telephone: ___________________________________________________________________

Fax: __________________________________________________________________________

Email: ________________________________________________________________________

MEMBERSHIP FEES:
Ordinary Members: Local Authorities, Health Boards, Enterprise Companies: £500.00 | Voluntary Organisations: Income under £10,000: £25 | £10,000-£75,000: £50 | £75,000-£175,000: £75 | Over £500,000: £100
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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.

The Poverty Alliance, 162 Buchanan Street, Glasgow G1 2LL
T: 0141 353 0440 | F: 0141 353 0686 | E: admin@povertyalliance.org | www.povertyalliance.org