

Welcome to the

Poverty & Health Inequalities Forum

We will get started at 13:00



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Centre for Homelessness and
Inclusion Health

Poverty and Health Inequalities Forum

13 November 2025 | 1300 – 1645



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Session 1: Overview

Keynotes and Panel One
1300 – 1425



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Welcome and Housekeeping

Emilie McSwiggan, PhD student



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Welcome

- Today we hope to:
 - Make a space for people with an interest in poverty and health inequalities to come together and **share challenges and solutions**
 - **Raise awareness** among researchers and policy-makers who could help to make meaningful change
 - Create opportunities for **positive connections and future collaborations.**
- Everyone welcome. Everyone's voices matter. Everybody has something worth sharing.



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Some acknowledgments

- Our focus is Scotland – but poverty is an important, global challenge.
- The ‘cost of living’ crisis, and workplace insecurity, affects many of us.
 - Do what you can
 - Self-care matters
 - Follow-up resources
- There’ll be some tough stuff today – step away if you need to.



Housekeeping (1 of 2)

- **Fire**
 - If the alarm goes off, we need to leave!
- **Comfort**
 - Come and go as you need to
 - Break-out spaces on all floors
 - 15-minute breaks at 14:25 and 15:30
 - Tea and coffee will be served
 - **At the end:** This building closes at 17:00 sharp



Housekeeping (2 of 2)

- **Inclusion and Engagement**
 - Please use the mic at all times
 - If you're not sure, ask us!
 - Online spaces for sharing questions
 - Want to stay in touch? Let us know via the evaluation form
- **Photography and recording**
 - Speakers and panellists only (and spoken questions)



Thanks

- **For funding:** to enable community involvement, as well as tea and coffee from Social Bite – Usher Small Grants Fund and ACRC
- **For organisation and support:** Event co-organisers – Emily Adams, Livvy Swann, Carey Lunan and Stewart Mercer
- **For behind-the-scenes practical help:**
 - Usher Reception: Christy and Brenda
 - ACRC Programme Office: Rob, Janice, Lucy, Gregor, Daria and Simba
 - Usher Small Grants and Finance: Andrew, Oscar and Paula
- **All our speakers, contributors, volunteers and attendees**



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Agenda for today

- **1300-1425 Session 1: Introduction to Poverty and Health Inequalities in Scotland**
 - Keynote speakers and Panel session (Inequalities in Healthcare)
 - Break @ 1425 (tea and coffee; community artwork)
- **1445-1530 Session 2: At the Sharp End – Racism, Destitution, Migration & Homelessness**
 - Panel session
 - Break @ 1530 (community artwork)
- **1545-1645 Session 3: Learning from Communities**
 - Presentations, short films and closing remarks – event ends at 1645



Introductory Keynote on Poverty and Health Inequalities

Stewart Mercer, Professor of Primary Care & Multimorbidity
University of Edinburgh



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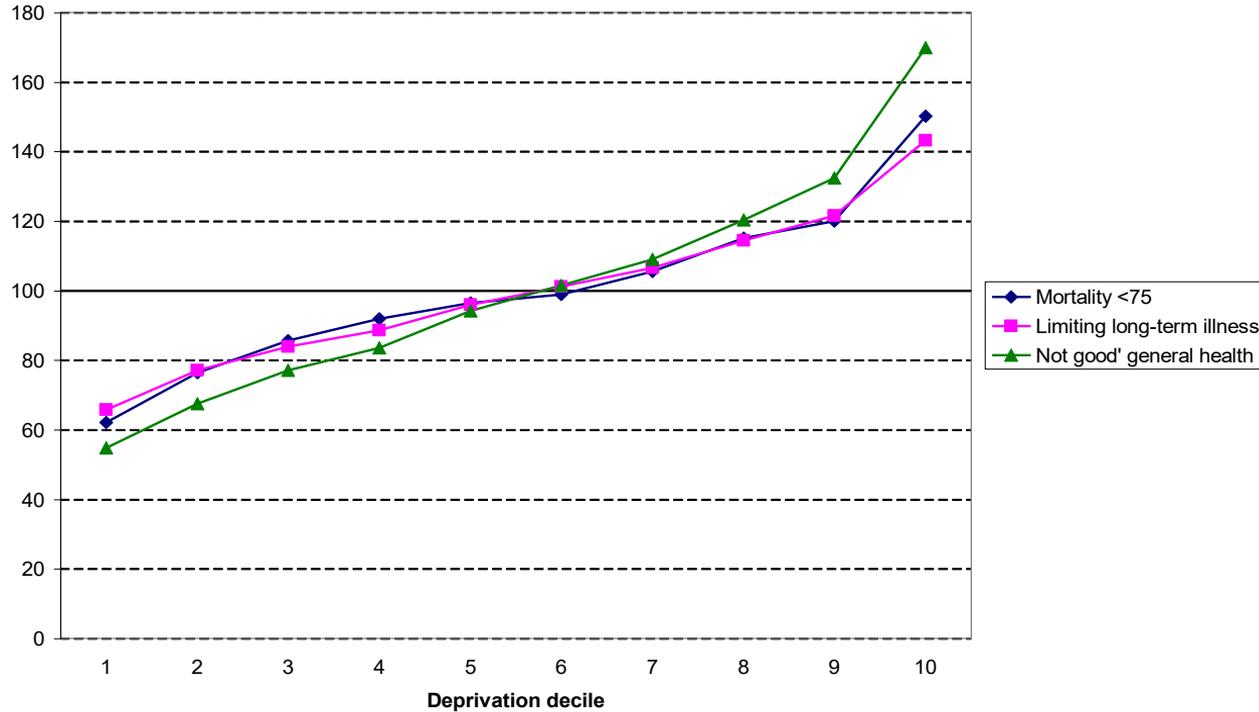


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Problem? What problem?



Scotland has the widest health inequalities in Western Europe





HEALTHY
LIFE
EXPECTANCY
years

TOTAL
LIFE
EXPECTANCY
years

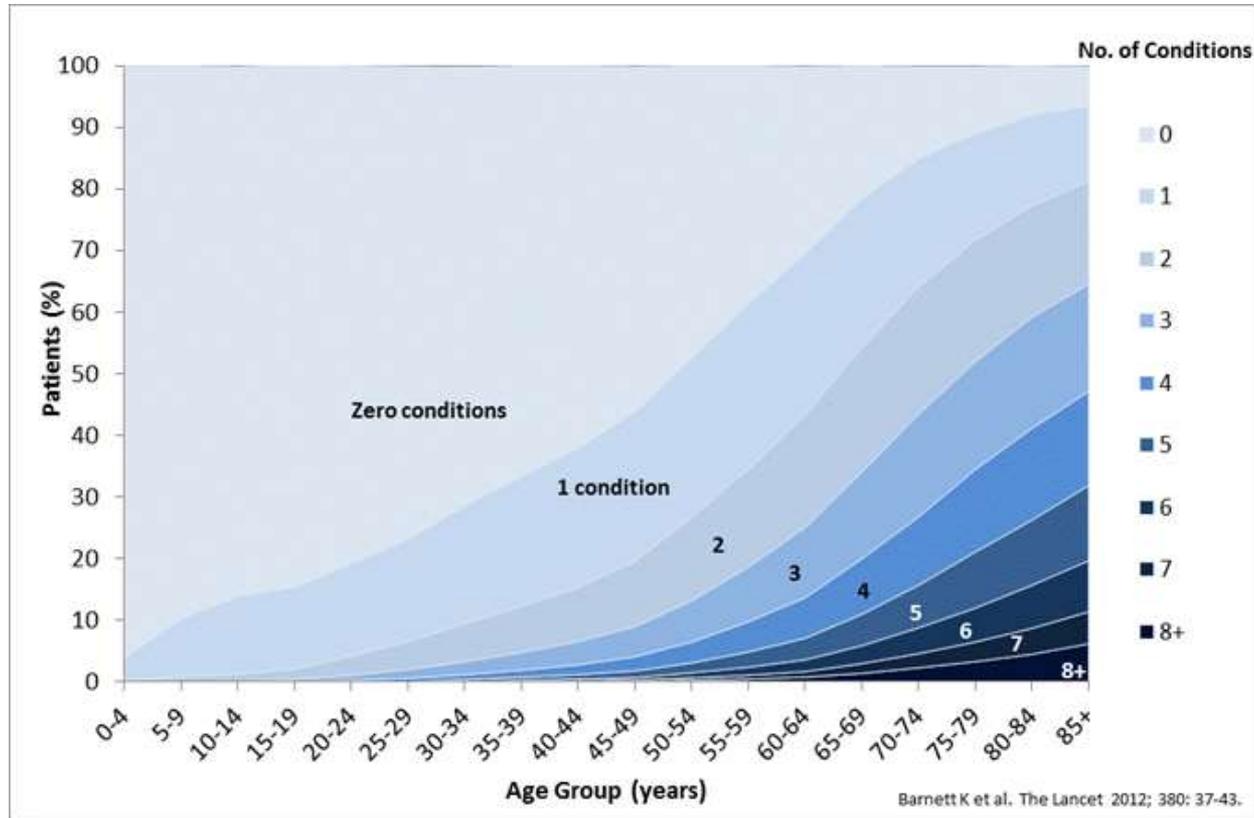
MEN

RICHEST 10%	72	83
POOREST 10%	47	69
DIFFERENCE	25	14

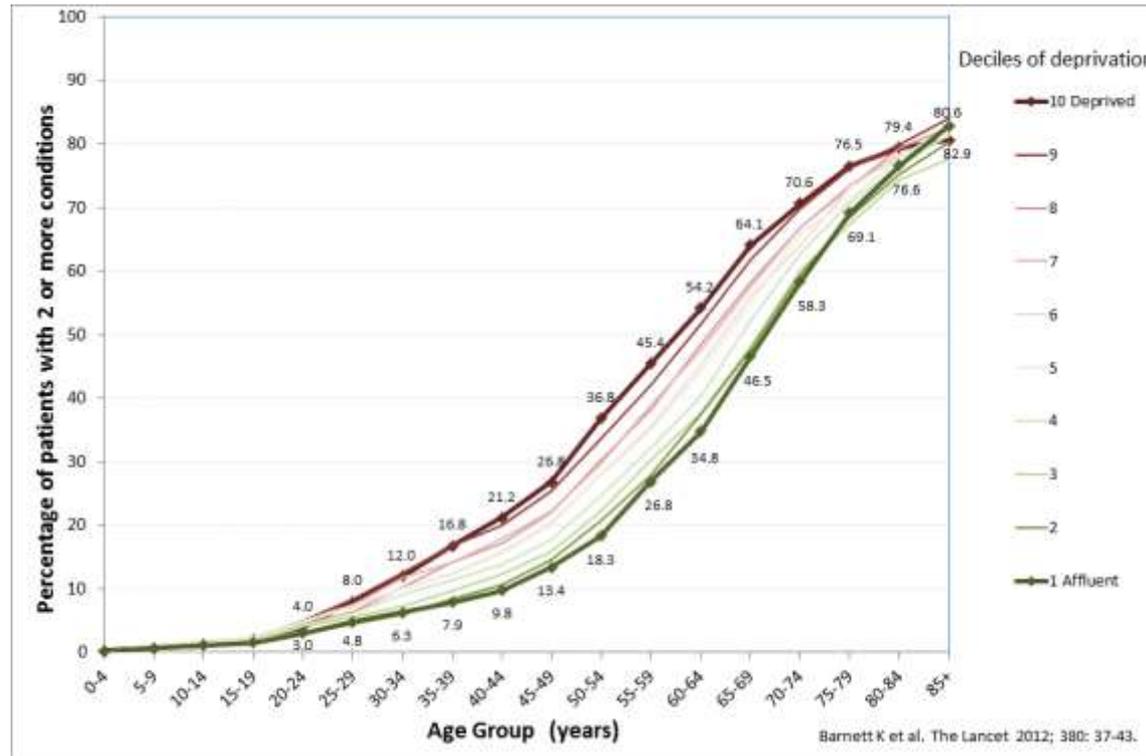
WOMEN

RICHEST 10%	72	86
POOREST 10%	50	76
DIFFERENCE	22	10

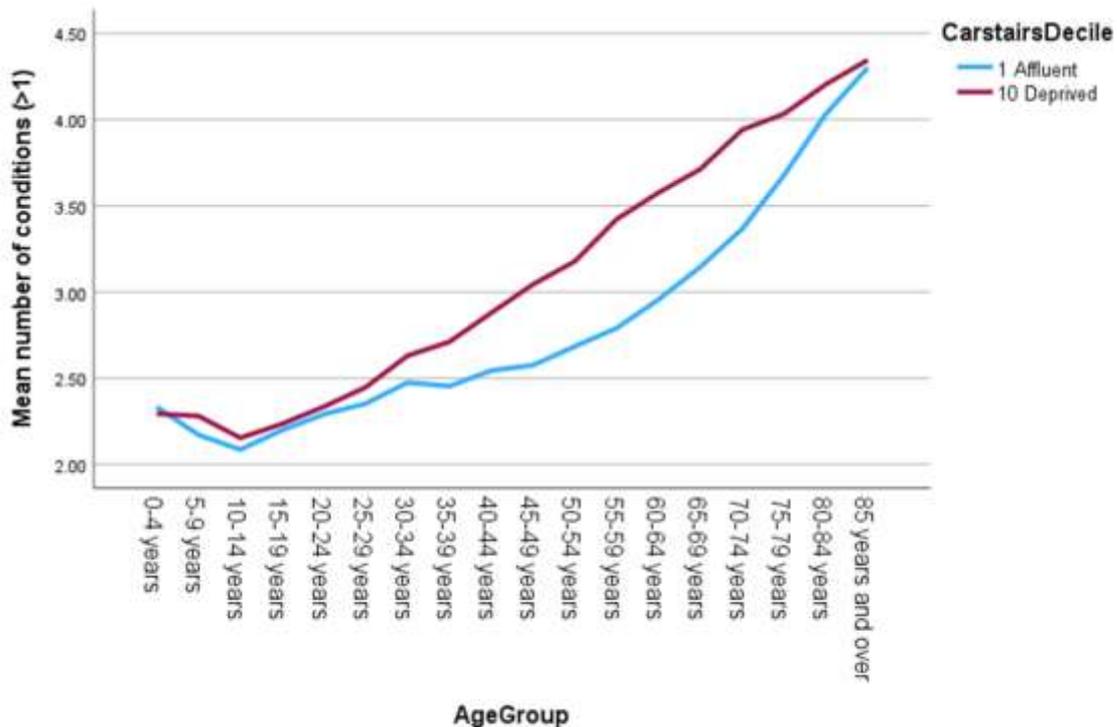
As we get older, multimorbidity becomes the norm...



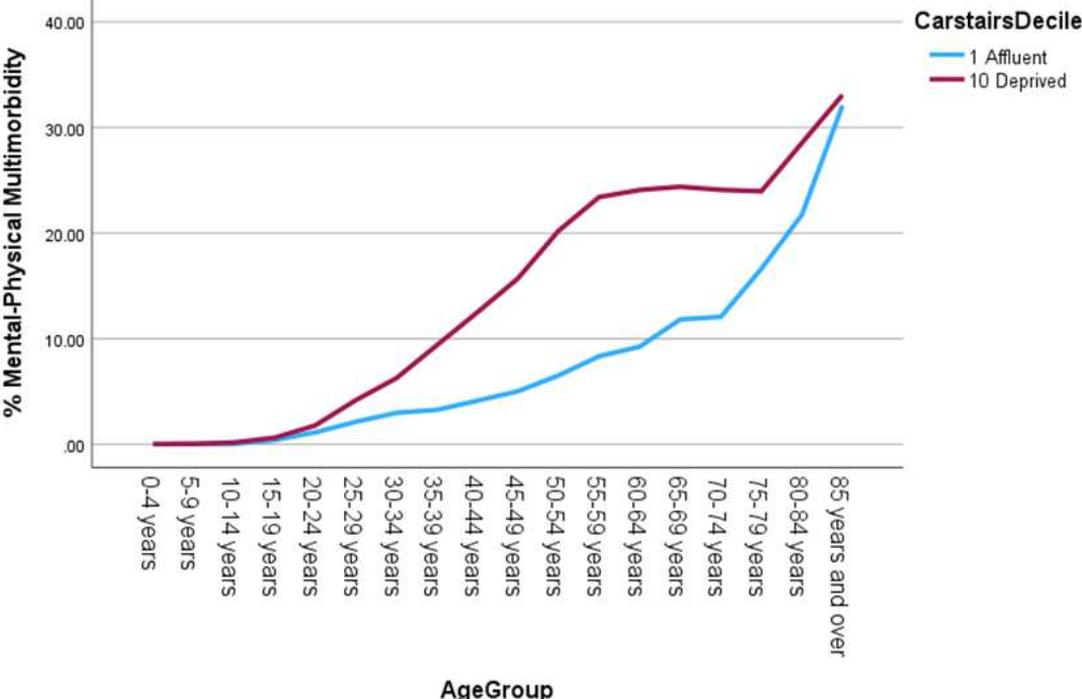
Multimorbidity is socially patterned occurring 10-15 years earlier in the most deprived areas of Scotland



Multimorbidity is also more severe in deprived areas



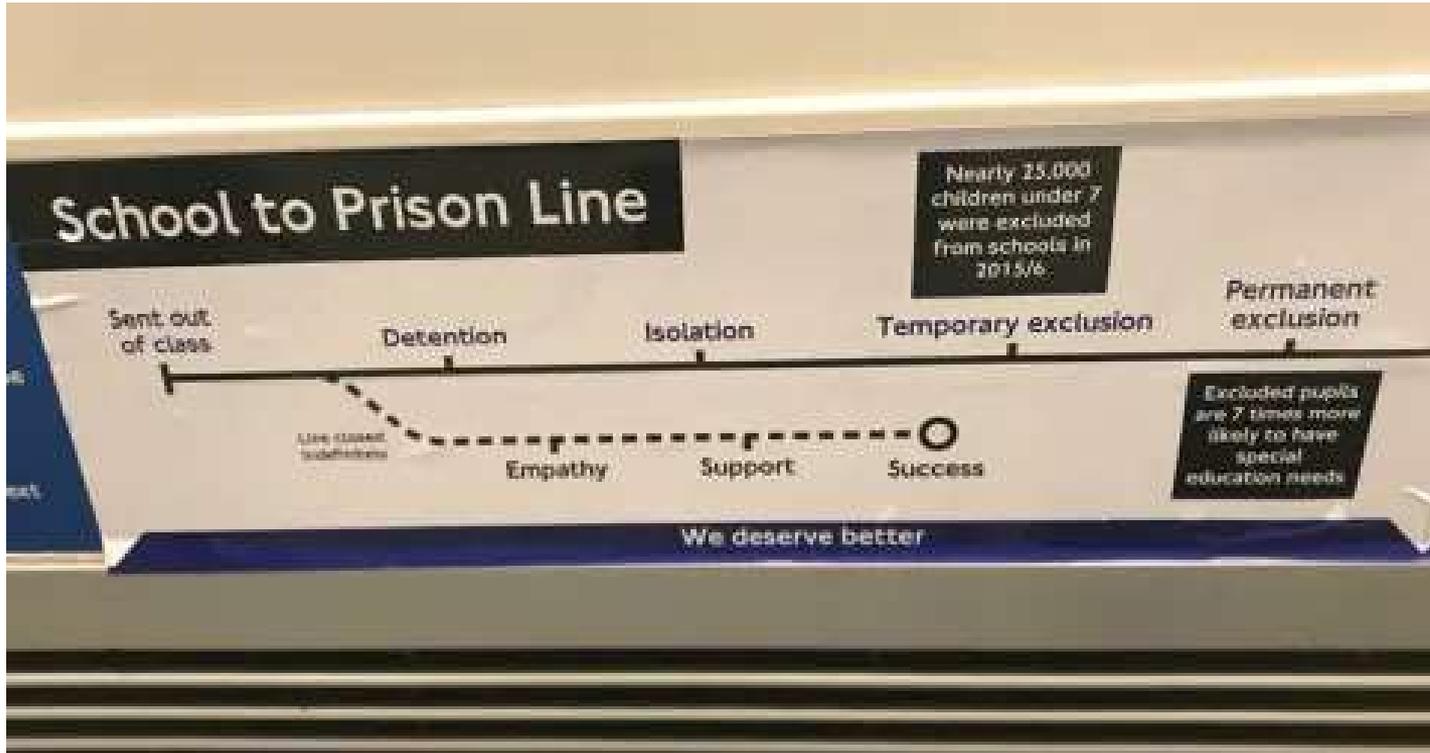
Mental-physical multimorbidity is MUCH more common in deprived areas (40 year gap)



Homelessness in Scotland – shocking stats



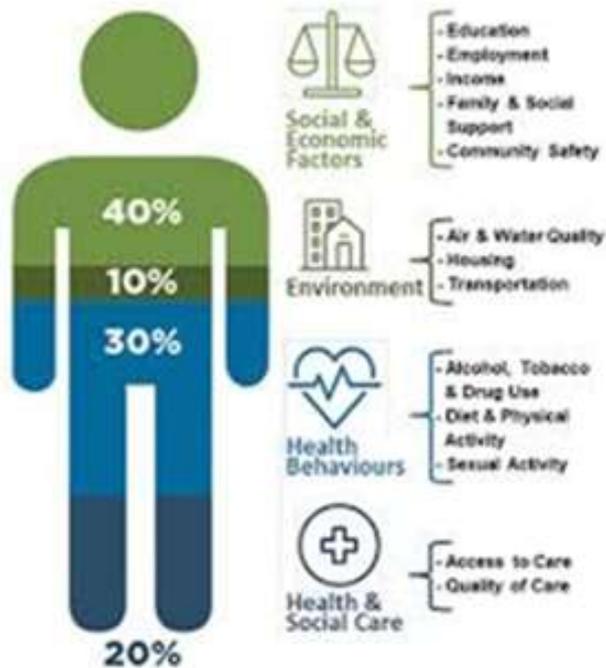
- >53,000 homeless/threatened with homelessness in 2024/25
- One household in Scotland becomes homeless every 15 minutes
- 41 children in Scotland become homeless every day
- 1 in 8 people experience homelessness in Scotland
- Scotland has > twice the rate of homeless deaths than England
- The mean age at death is 44 years



<https://eachother.org.uk/>

Healthcare is a social determinant too....

- If healthcare is delivered **inequitably** then health services will **widen** rather than narrow **health inequalities**



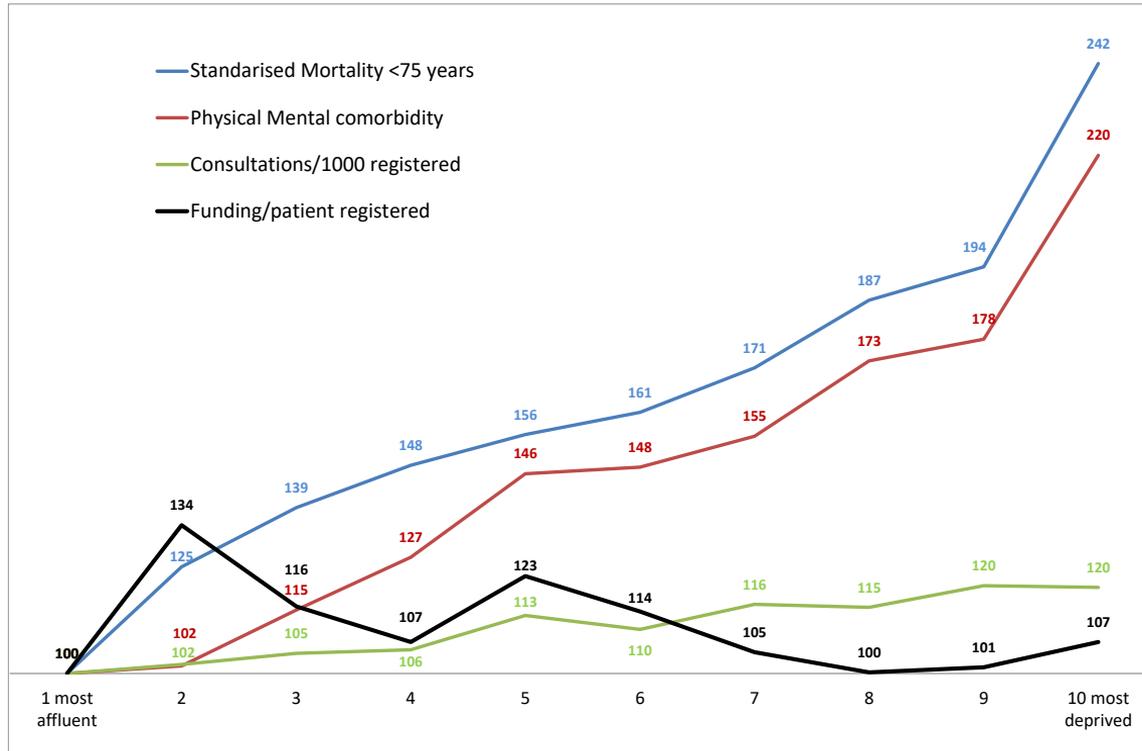
The inverse care law

- *“the availability of good medical care tends to vary inversely with the need for it in the population served.” The Lancet 1971*

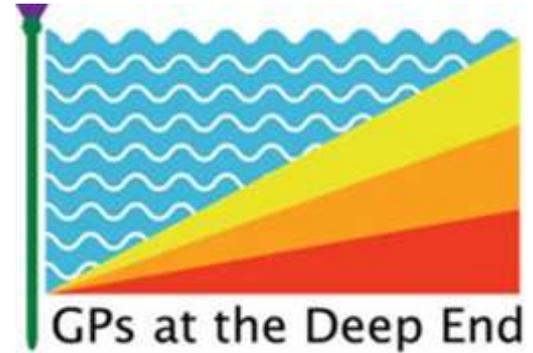
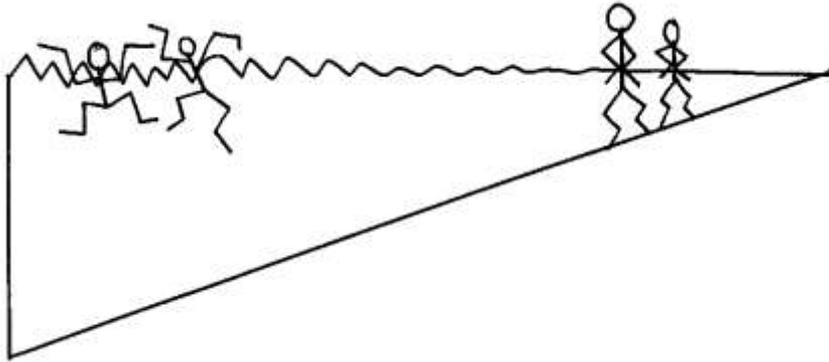


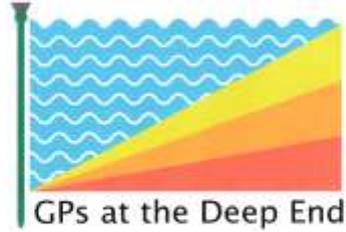
Dr Julian Tudor Hart, 1927-2018

2015: Percentage differences from least deprived decile for mortality, mental-physical multimorbidity, consultations and funding



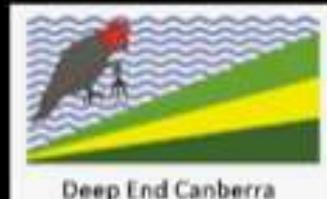
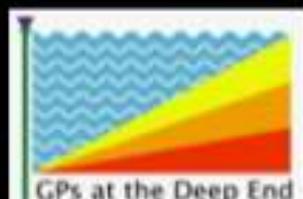
The inverse care law...GPs at the Deep End





General Practitioners at the Deep End

*Final report of a special
meeting held on 16 September
2009 at Erskine Bridge Hotel*



Is the inverse care law still a thing?

- Numerous policies and interventions over the last 20 years
- 2018 Scottish GP contract
- Expansion of the multidisciplinary team
- Roll-out of social prescribing link workers
- Welfare rights officers in general practices

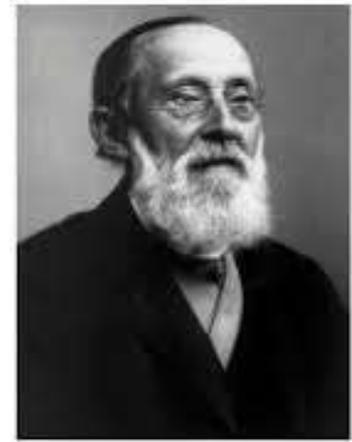




2025

“ Medicine is a social science and politics is nothing else but medicine on a large scale.”

Rudolf Virchow



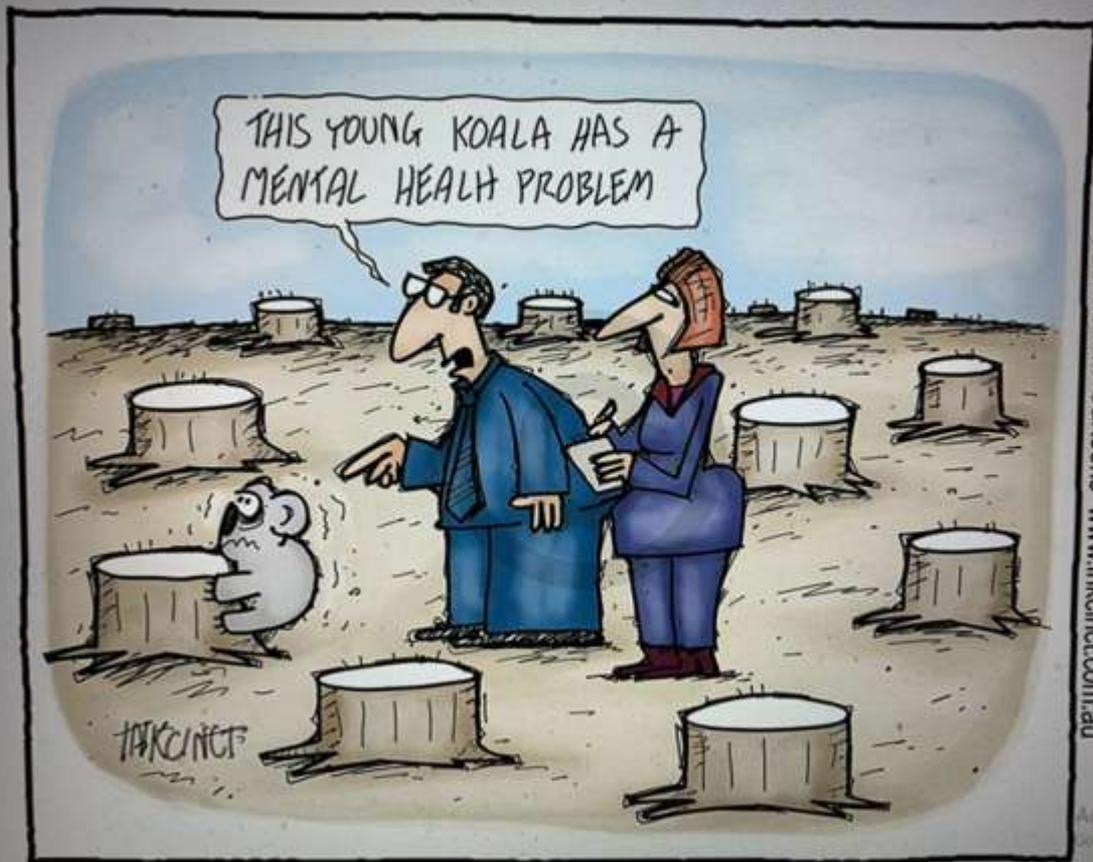
1848



“The NHS will last as long as there are folk left with the faith to fight for it.”

Nye Bevan

Founder of the National Health Service



This cartoon can be used without charge by individuals & community groups.
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Activate Windows
Go to Settings to activate Windows.

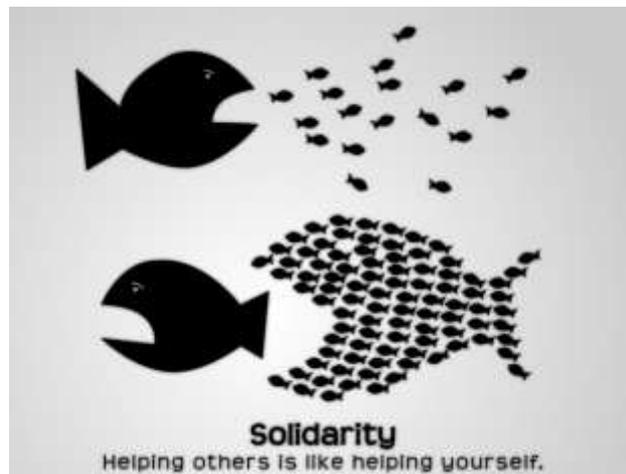
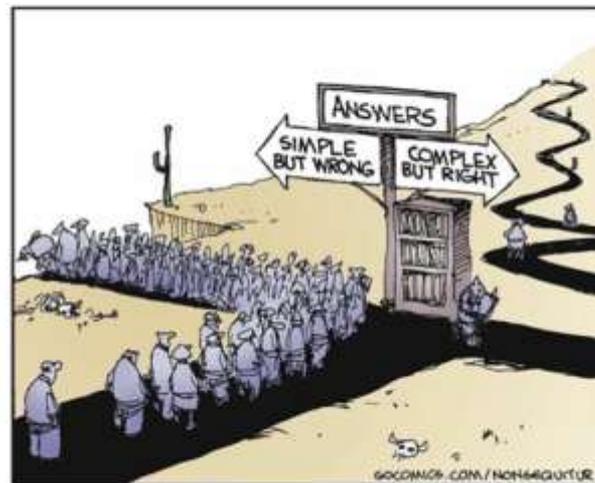
Green Social Prescribing

Welcome to Deep Green – a toolkit for Green Social Prescribing. It is designed to help GPs and other health and social-care practitioners working in primary care to prescribe outdoor, nature-based activities.

This toolkit provides support, information and evidence about Green Social Prescribing. It can be used by practitioners looking for help to add or expand Green Social Prescribing in their practice. It can also be used for people interested in the subject more generally.

<https://www.deepgreen.scot/>





Thank you



Poverty and Health in Scotland

Lauren Wilks, Senior Research Officer, The Poverty Alliance



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Poverty and Health Inequalities Forum

13th November 2025, Usher Building, University of Edinburgh

Poverty and health in Scotland: Data, trends, and listening to lived experience

Dr Lauren Wilks, The Poverty Alliance; Lauren.Wilks@povertyalliance.org



Poverty and health in Scotland: Data, trends, and listening to lived experience

What I'll cover today:

- The Poverty Alliance – who we are and what we do
- Poverty in Scotland – definitions, data, trends, key messages
- Poverty and health in Scotland – data, trends, key messages
- Drivers of poverty and mechanisms for tackling poverty in Scotland
- Participatory approaches/research and listening to lived experience

The Poverty Alliance

- The Poverty Alliance is Scotland's network of organisations and individuals working together to end poverty
- Established in 1992, the Alliance is a membership organisation, which has extensive experience in addressing issues related to poverty
- Together, we influence policy and practice, support communities to challenge poverty, provide evidence through research and build public support for the solutions to tackle poverty.

The Poverty Alliance

The change we want to see:

1. Social security provides a more reliable source of adequate income
2. More jobs that reduce in-work poverty
3. Services more effectively help to reduce and prevent poverty
4. More organisations and individuals collaborate to address poverty



How is poverty defined and measured?

“Poverty means not being able to heat your home, pay your rent, or buy the essentials for your children. It means waking up every day facing insecurity, uncertain, and impossible decisions about money. It means facing marginalisation – and even discrimination – because of financial circumstances. The constant stress it causes can lead to problems that deprive people of the chance to play a full part in society.”

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation

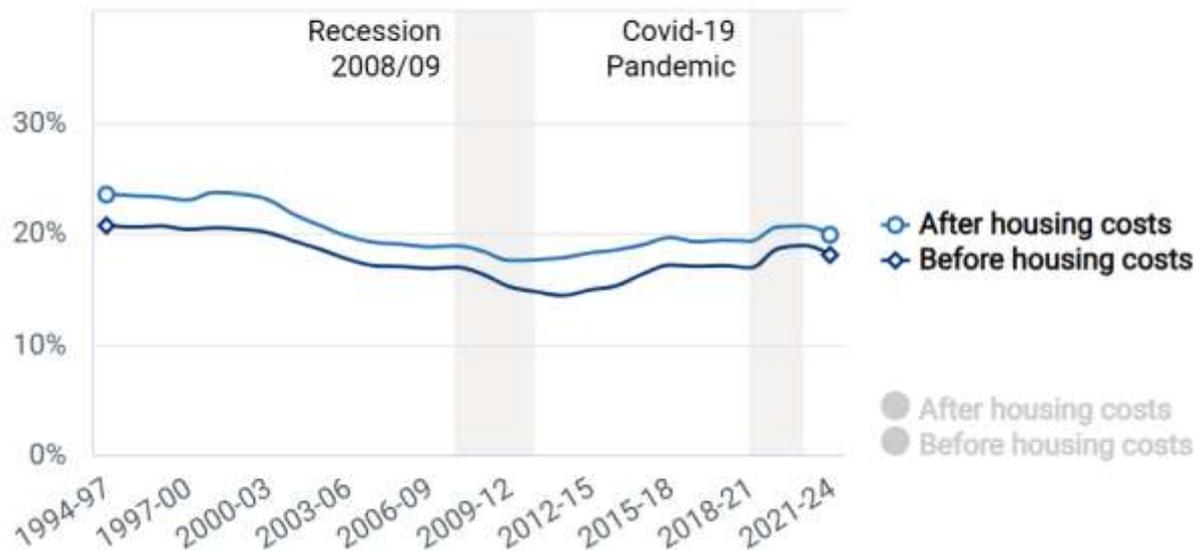
Measures include:

- Relative poverty – where households have less than 60% of median income.
- Absolute poverty – where households have less than 60% of the median income in 2010/11, uprated by inflation.

Poverty trends in Scotland

Figure 1: Relative poverty rate for all individuals in line with previous stable trend

Proportion of people in relative poverty, Scotland



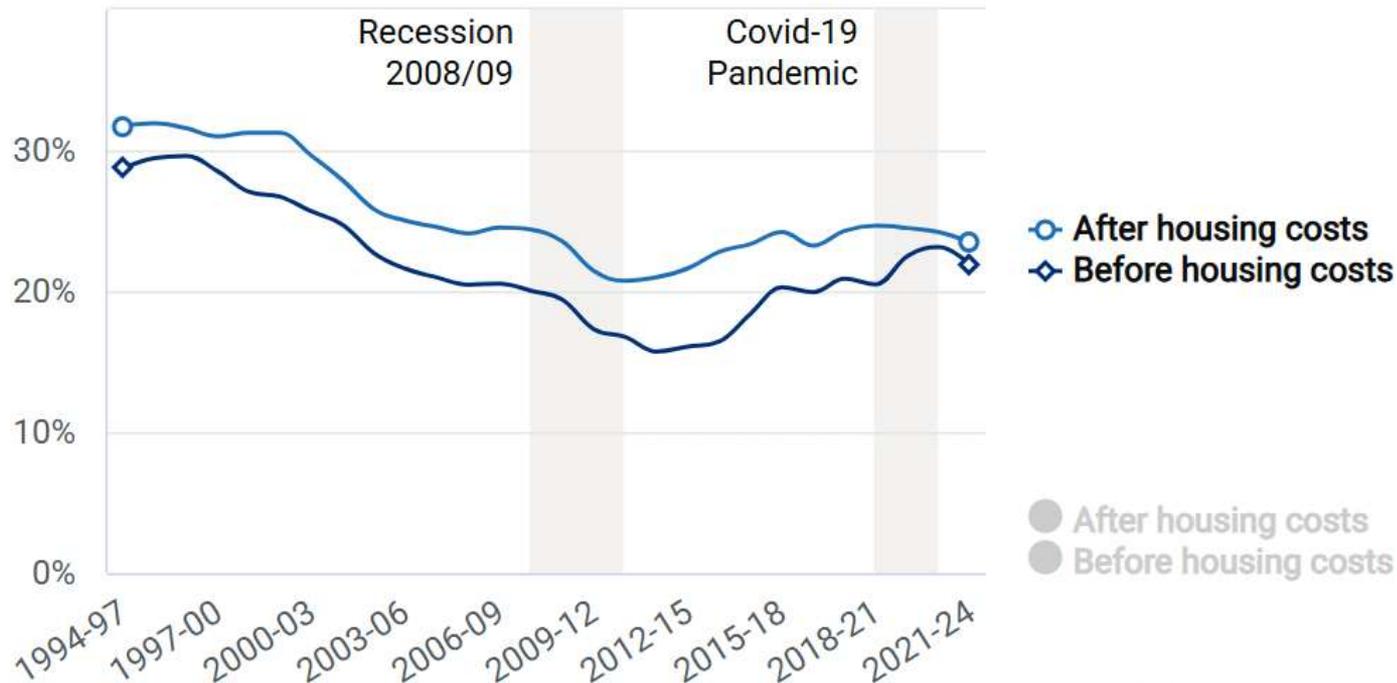
Source: Family Resources Survey

Who is most likely to be affected by poverty in Scotland?

- **Children:** In the period 2021-24, 23% of children were living in poverty. This is higher than the 20% of working-age adults and 15% of pensioners living in poverty. Nearly 9 in 10 children in poverty are in Scottish Government's 'priority families' identified as being at higher risk of child poverty. These are: Families where someone is disabled; Single-parent families; Families with a baby under 1; Large families (3 or more children); and Minority ethnic families.
- **Disabled people** 38% of people living in a family where someone is in receipt of a disability benefit are in poverty, excluding income from disability benefits.
- **Minority ethnic households** Minority ethnic households are more likely to be in poverty compared to white British households.
- **Adults under 25** Adults under 25 are more likely to be in poverty than older adults.
- **Single parent families** a third of children living in a single parent family are in poverty.

Child poverty trends

Proportion of children in relative poverty, Scotland



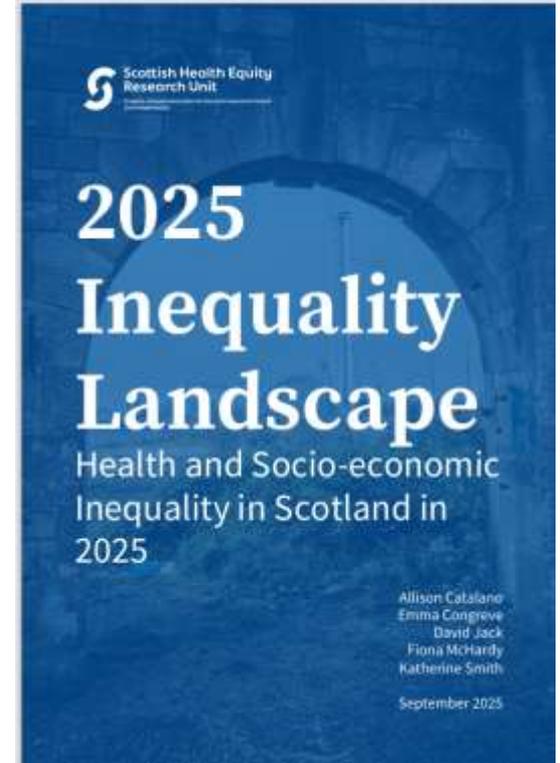
Source: Family Resources Survey

Health and poverty in Scotland

Progress on key trends: what changed this year?

- Some modest improvements in incomes; some child-poverty measures are not yet translating into material reductions in health inequality. Structural drivers – housing insecurity and quality, working conditions, and the long shadow of austerity – continue to shape outcomes.
- Young adult men and preventable deaths: Scotland’s rates of drug-related deaths, alcohol-specific deaths and deaths from suicide remain the highest in the UK, with drug misuse mortality among the highest in Western Europe.

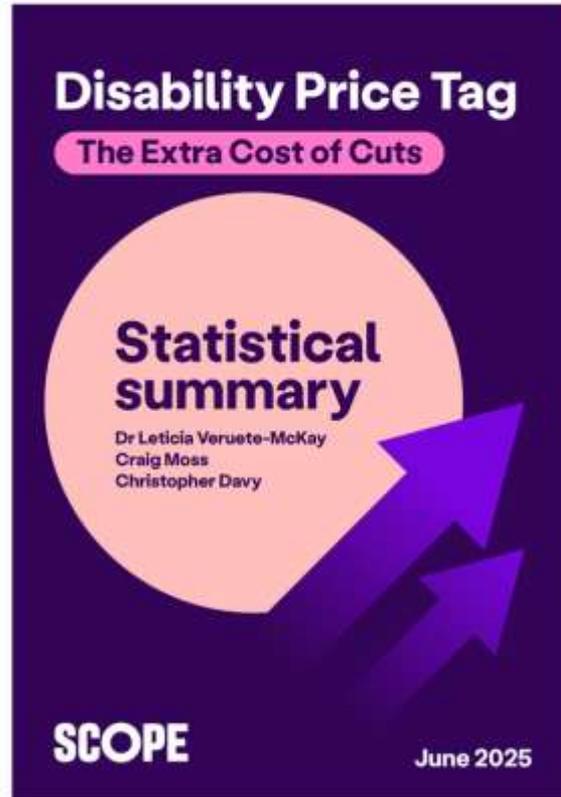
SHERU (2025)



Health and poverty in Scotland

SCOPE

Uses data from the Family Resources Survey to calculate the extra costs faced by disabled households.



- Disabled households need an extra £1,095 each month on average to have the same standard of living as non-disabled households.
- With inflation, the extra cost of disability is estimated to reach £1,224 per month by 2029 to 2030 financial year.
- Proposed welfare reforms could push disabled people in a more precarious financial position into deep poverty.

povertyalliance.org

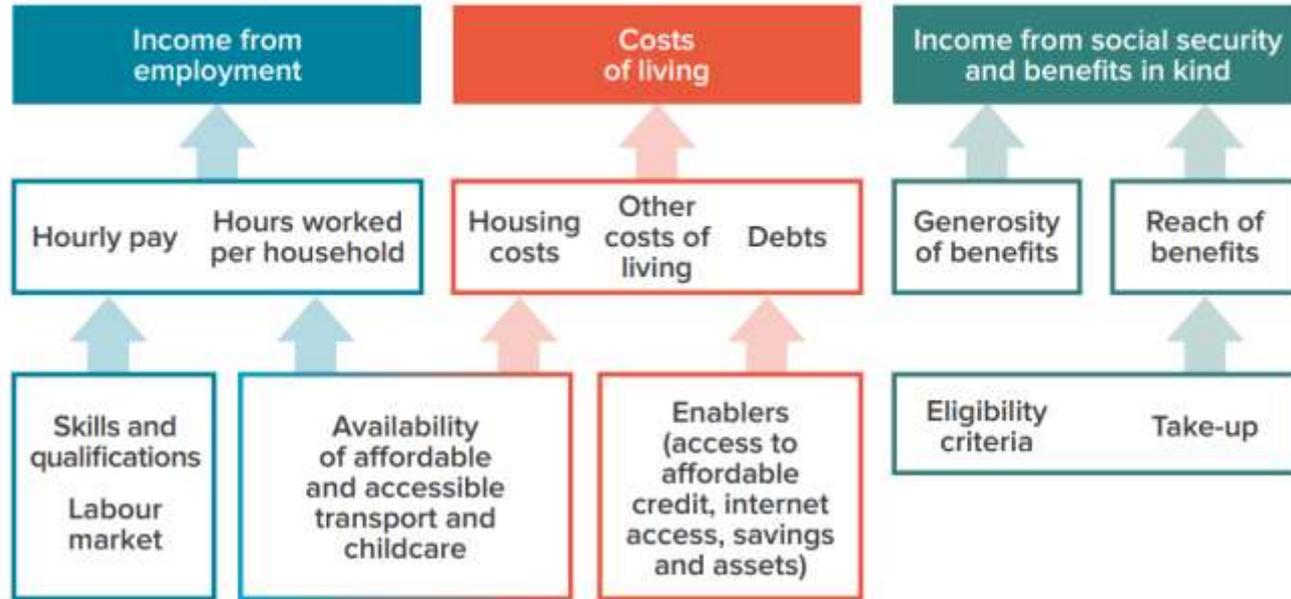
What causes poverty?

Poverty is **structural**. This means it's a consequence of economic, political and social forces that exist outside the immediate control of the individual.

Poverty is both a cause and a consequence of a lack of power



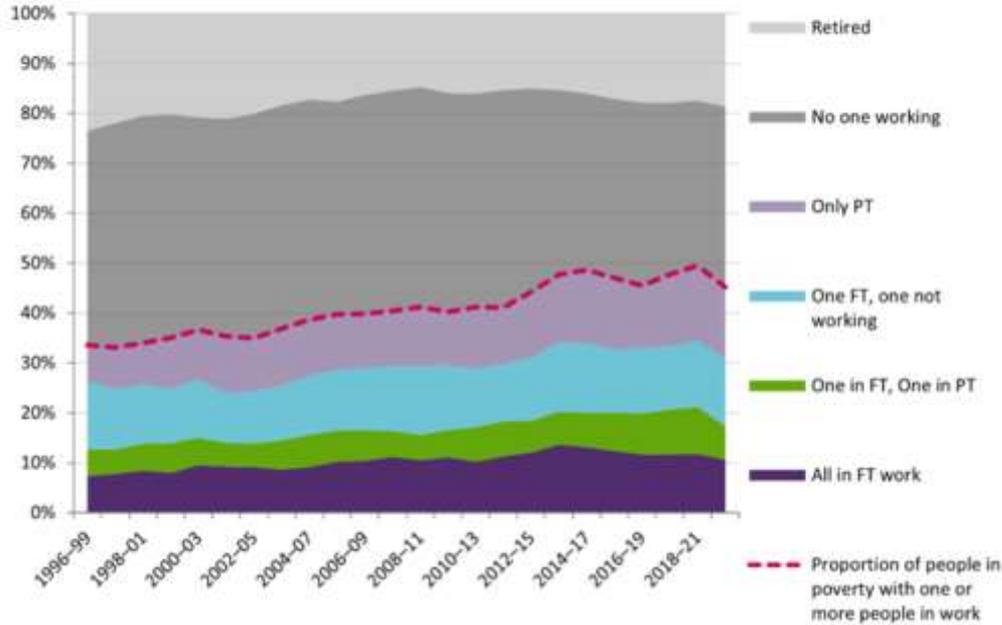
Drivers of poverty



Scottish Government (Best Start, Bright Futures Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026)

In-work poverty

Figure 7: Composition of people in poverty by family work status



JRF (2023)

Solutions to poverty: Scottish Government priorities

- Social Security Scotland
- Child Poverty
- Establishment of the Poverty and Inequality Commission
- Action on Youth Unemployment
- Participation and listening to lived experience



Solutions to poverty: Other mechanisms for change

- Better jobs for everyone who needs one, with fair conditions and wages that pay the bills.
- Better investment for life's essentials, like affordable homes, good public transport, a thriving natural environment and strong public services.
- Better social security so that all of us have a foundation for the future.

SCOTLAND *DEMANDS* BETTER

Participation and lived experience



povertyalliance.org



Poverty Alliance participatory research – Listening to lived experience

“The life of Glasgow pigeons is more certain”: Mental health and wellbeing amongst people navigating the asylum process
May 2023

Research findings:

- Importance of mental health ‘nourishment’ - through social activities including volunteering, *but the* cost of transport often prevented participants from being able to engage in such activities.
- Navigating the asylum system consistently undermined participants’ efforts to maintain and improve their mental health and wellbeing



Poverty Alliance participatory research – Listening to lived experience



Research findings:

- Significantly reduced incomes due to long periods of sick leave, having to substantially reduce working hours, job loss, or becoming reliant on social security.
- Future insecurity due to negative implications for pension contributions, having to draw down pensions early, and eating into savings.
- A lack of employment support including poor awareness and understanding of Long COVID among employers.
- Difficulties with diagnosis and recognition.
- Additional costs - paying for adaptations, employing carers etc.
- Barriers to accessing social security.

Poverty Alliance participatory research – Listening to lived experience



povertyalliance.org



References

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- Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2021). *Ethnicity, poverty, and the data in Scotland*.
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2023). *A minimum income standard for the UK in 2023*.
- Scottish Government (2022). *Best Start, Bright Futures Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026*.
- Scottish Government (2025). *Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland 2021-24*.
- Scottish Health Equity Research Unit (2025). *2025 Inequality Landscape*.
- The Poverty Alliance and Robert Gordon University (2025). *Long Covid, Long Consequences: Financial, employment and social security impacts in Scotland*.

Questions for Keynote Speakers:

In the room: raise a hand, we'll come to you with the mic!

Online (or in person): Share your questions on Wooclap

Go to **wooclap.com**
Enter code **LERNET**

(or scan the QR code!)



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Panel One

Perspectives on Poverty and Inequalities in Healthcare



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Perspectives on Poverty and Inequalities in Healthcare

- Panellists:
 - **Carey Lunan**, Chair, Scottish Deep End Network
 - **Beth Bareham**, Research Associate, Newcastle University
 - **Roisin Hurst**, Project Manager (Scottish Community Links Worker Network), Voluntary Health Scotland
 - **Tricia Tooman**, ACRC Research Fellow, University of Edinburgh
- Facilitated by **Kieran Sweeney**, G.P. and PhD student



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Break

Enjoy tea and coffee from Social Bite
Artwork from Chance 2 Change
We'll start again at 14:45



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Session 2: At the Sharp End

Panel Two
1445 – 1530



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Panel Two

At the Sharp End: Racism,
Destitution, Migration and
Homelessness



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At the Sharp End: Racism, Destitution, Migration and Homelessness

- Panellists:
 - **Kevin Chalmers**, Team Leader, Bethany's Rapid Reaccommodation Welcome Centre
 - **Gwenetta Curry**, Reader in Race, Ethnicity and Health, Usher Institute, University of Edinburgh
 - **Sarah Johnsen**, Chair in Homelessness and Inclusion Health, University of Edinburgh
- Facilitated by **Emily Adams**, PhD student, University of Edinburgh



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Poverty and Health Inequalities at the Sharp End: Racism, Destitution, Migration and Homelessness



Professor Sarah Johnsen



Dr Gwenetta Curry



Kevin Chalmers

We were open for **181 nights** during the coldest part of the year

618 individual people accessed our service

58 nationalities were represented

11,583 times when a person was protected from sleeping on the streets for a night

62 people on average used the service every day

23,000[†] meals were provided by 40 church and 2 corporate volunteer catering teams

99% of known outcomes are positive^{††}

[†]This number includes the roughly 6,270 breakfasts that were funded by the Scottish Government

^{††}55% of outcomes are known

Impact

2024-25 Season





Justice and the racial dimensions of health inequalities: A view from COVID-19

Agomoni Ganguli-Mitra¹  | Kaveri Qureshi² | Gwenetta D. Curry³ | Nasar Meer²

¹School of Law, University of Edinburgh,
Edinburgh, UK

²School of Social and Political Science,
University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK

³Usher Institute of Population Health Sciences
and Informatics, University of Edinburgh,
Edinburgh, UK

Abstract

In this paper, we take up the call to further examine structural injustice in health, and racial inequalities in particular. We examine the many facets of racism: structural, interpersonal and institutional as they appeared in the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK, and emphasize the relevance of their systemic character. We suggest that such inequalities were entirely

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic and Scottish Public Sector Response on Refugees and Asylum Seekers: Stage 2 Report (Evidence Review)

Emilie McSwiggan, Emily Adams, Keira Charteris, Anna Gordon, Damilola Iduye, Aimee Kelley, Christa St Jean, Thulani Ashcroft, Marshall Dozier, Ruth McQuillan, Evropi Theodoratou and Gwenetta Curry **on behalf of UNCOVER Applied Evidence Synthesis**

27 February 2024
Version 6



UNCOVER

Applied Evidence Synthesis



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Hard Edges:

The Reality for Women
Affected by Severe and
Multiple Disadvantage

Sarah Johnsen & Janice Blenkinsopp



Tackling Scotland's Housing Emergency

Housing Emergency Action Plan

September 2025

 Scottish Government
Riaghaidh na h-Alba

Race, Ethnicity and Homelessness in the UK:

Executive summary of final report of a knowledge and capacity building programme



HERIOT
WATT
UNIVERSITY



References

Rapid Re-accommodation Welcome Centre report Winter 24-25

<https://www.bethanychristiantrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/RRWC-Report-24-25.pdf>

Justice and the racial dimensions of health inequalities: A view from COVID-19

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/bioe.13010>

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic and Scottish Public Sector Response on Refugees and Asylum Seekers

<https://www.covid19inquiry.scot/sites/default/files/2024-04/Portfolio-1-UNCOVER-Refugees-and-Asylum-Seekers-STAGE-2-accessible.pdf>

Hard Edges: The Reality for Women Affected by Severe and Multiple Disadvantage

https://pure.hw.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/107153525/HardEdges-RealityForWomen_FullReport_logo_.pdf

Tackling Scotland's Housing Emergency

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/tackling-scotlands-housing-emergency/documents/>

Race, Ethnicity and Homelessness in the UK

https://pure.hw.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/152675515/HW_Homelessness_BEM_Exec_Summary_amended_A4_report_Aug25_1.0.pdf

Questions for the Panel:

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Break

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Session 3: Learning from Communities

Speakers and Short Films
1545 – 1645



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Fireside Chat: Perspectives from a Community Links Worker

Tess Roxburgh, Community Links Worker, Community Renewal
Trust *in conversation with* Emilie McSwiggan



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Homes, Heat and Healthy Kids: Ethical collaboration with community members

Olivia Swann, Senior Clinical Research Fellow, Centre for Medical Informatics, University of Edinburgh



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Homes, Heat and Healthy Kids:

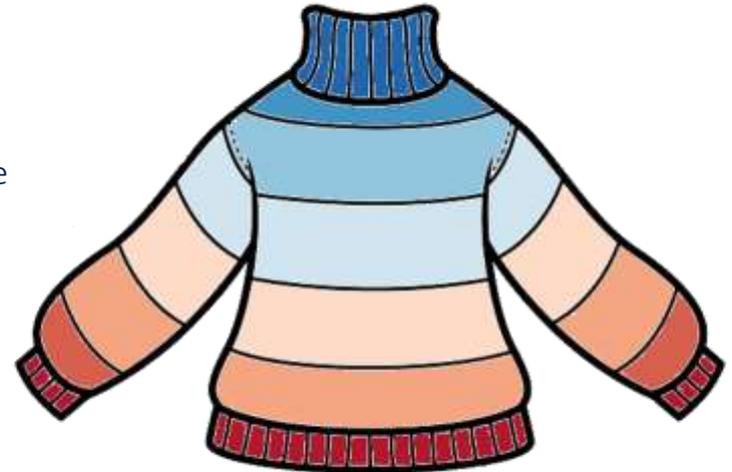
Ethical collaboration with community members

Dr Livvy Swann

Senior Clinical Research Fellow | Consultant Paediatrician | Usher Institute

Dr Tracy Jackson

Senior Research Fellow | PPIE Lead | Usher Institute



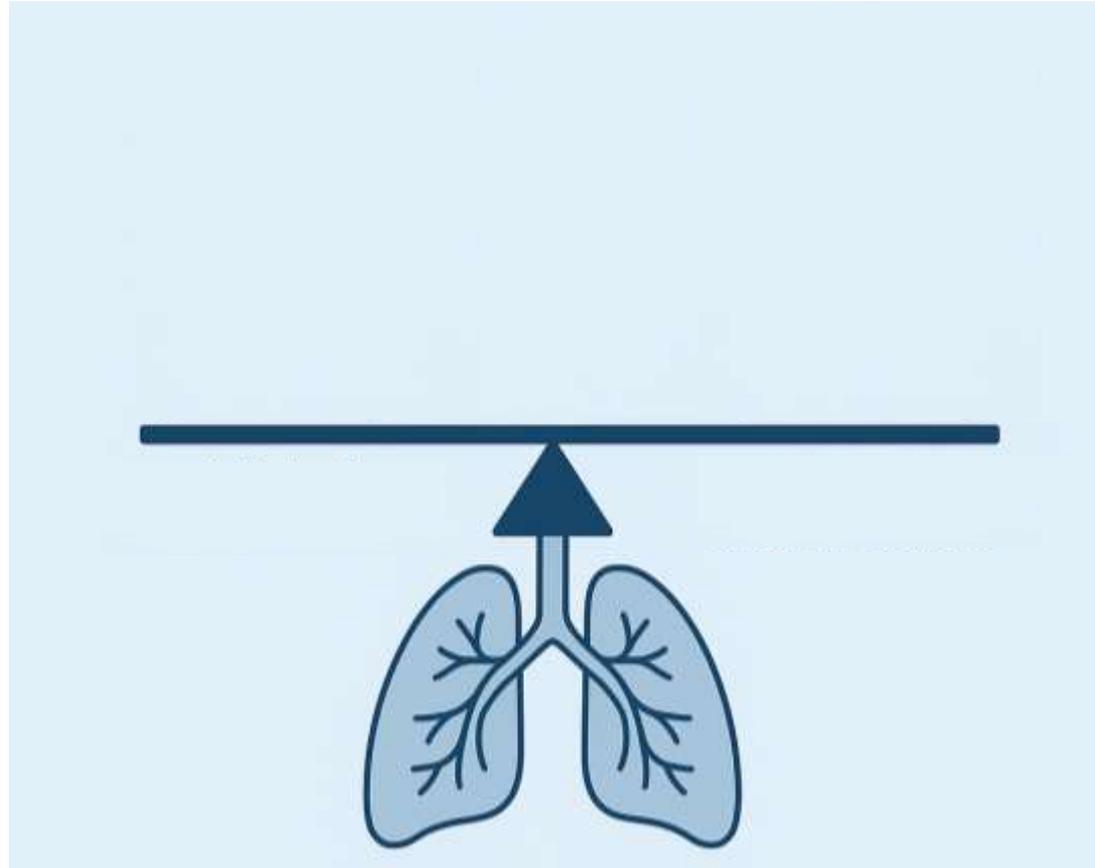


*“Our homes provide the living environment
that dictates our future health”*

Sir Michael Marmot

Homes, Heat and Healthy Kids Study

What is the best way to make a home warmer AND children healthier?



Homes, Heat and Healthy Kids Study



2008 - 2025

4 million child-years + 230,000 homes

- How many preschool respiratory infections could we avoid if every home was properly heated?
- What is the best way to make a home warmer AND children healthier?



Where could these findings lead?



- Reduce respiratory infections
- Improve lifelong respiratory health



- Inform policy
- Reduce inequalities from net zero policies



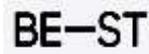
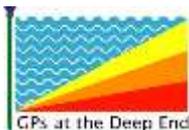
- Powerful, flexible methodology
- Adaptable for any population or condition



NHS RESEARCH SCOTLAND

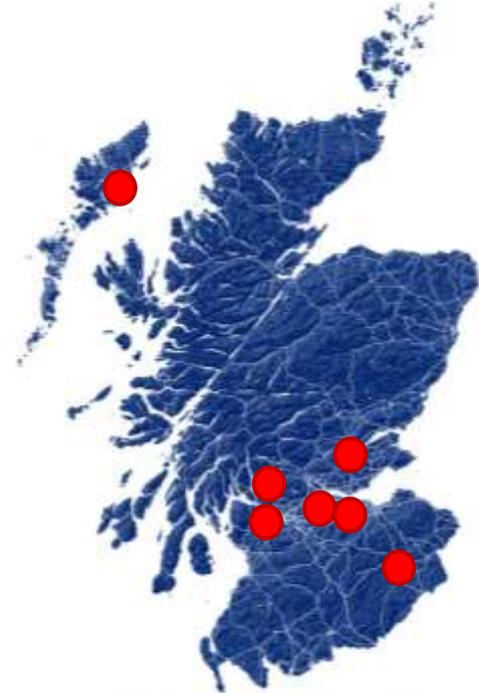


WORKING TOGETHER TO COMBAT POVERTY



The Parent Group

- Meaningful collaboration with parents facing heating challenges across diverse communities
- Poverty Alliance, word of mouth
- Outer Hebrides to the Scottish Borders
- Minoritised ethnic communities and asylum seekers
- Non-hierarchical – co-enquirers
- Individual approach to barriers to involvement
- Meet online and at times suitable to the group
- Childcare for in-person meetings
- Time - relationships, trust, permission, listening



Parent Group

“Classical” PPI

- Research questions
- Data discussions
- Stakeholder meeting

Beyond!

- Animation
- Personal videos
- Ethical storytelling workshops
- Hard to Reach or Easy to Ignore?
- Interactive game







Beyond Remuneration

NIHR guidelines for payment

- £25 per hour
- Power gradient
- Extractive or restorative?

Meaningful Recognition

- Validate expertise
- Partnered with Media Education → recognised qualifications
- SCQF Level 3 qualification - Access to Media
- SCQF Level 5 qualification - Community Leadership
- UoE Impact award



Impact

Local Leadership Development

- Established as recognized local leaders for change
- Built confidence in public speaking and advocacy
- Created networks for ongoing community leadership

Research Advocacy Skills

- Established as local advocates for responsible research
- Developed understanding of ethical research practices
- Built capacity to influence future research priorities

Skills and career enhancement

- Development of communication and presentation skills
- Attained SCQF Level 5 qualifications for career advancement
- Overcame traditional barriers to education and professional development

Thank you



Eleanor Harrison
Tim Wilding
Caroline Fyfe
Chris Dibben
Tom Clemens
Steve Cunningham
Ruth Doherty
Richa Kulkarni
Freya Semple
Milly Young



Grainne McGill
Tim Sharpe



Aziz Sheikh



Abi Whitehouse



Pia Hardelid
Ian Hamilton
Russell Viner



Vittal
Katikireddi



Jonathon Taylor

Community Involvement



Tracy Jackson
Laura Gonzalez-Rienda
Kate Deacon

The Parent Group

Andrew Anderson
Gloria Odhi
Anwar
Shogufta Haq
Elizabeth Mueller

Funders



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Edinburgh Clinical Academic Track



European Society for
Paediatric Infectious
Diseases





*“Kids are the fuel in society’s rocket.
There’s no second chance to support this generation”*

Lord Victor Adebowale

Olivia.Swann@ed.ac.uk



Website

Health n Equality

Chance 2 Change film-poems

(please bear with us while we switch over to video, and pause the Teams recording)



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Reflections on Session 3:

We can't take questions live in this session, but please share your thoughts online

Go to **wooclap.com**

Enter code **LERNET**

(or scan the QR code!)



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What can we do in our own work?

Closing Remarks and Reflections

Carey Lunan, Chair, Scottish Deep End Network



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Feedback

Please complete the evaluation form!

Or send your thoughts to the organisers via
emilie.mcswiggan@ed.ac.uk

Reminder: this building closes at 5pm sharp!

Poverty and Health Inequalities
Forum



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