

Candidate 2 evidence

Poverty is a consequence of Individual Choice



Word count: 5,315

Through this dissertation I will be considering the functionalist, marxist, new right and psycho-socialist perspectives on poverty. Functionalists believe poverty is a person's own fault for not working hard enough to work a higher paying job. Similarly, the new right believes poverty is a consequence of an individual choosing to be lazy, not have a job and to live off of benefits. On the opposite hand, marxists believe that poverty is a consequence of capitalism and exploitation within society, not personal choices. Psycho-socialists agree that poverty is not a result of individual choices. However, they believe it is a consequence of inequalities in society which increase social issues and mental health problems. I chose to investigate these theories as they are the most mainstream and have had a large impact on the views both political based organisations have on poverty and the lens that the media report poverty through. However, I am aware that these theories are still very limited and linked to colonial ways of viewing the world and I recognise that there is a lot more to learn. These perspectives have provided me with the tools to begin comparative analysis; but in the future there are more voices to consider. Politically, individualists believe poverty is a consequence of individual choice whereas collectivists believe that poverty is a consequence of society and structural factors. The conservative government we currently have has a very individualistic outlook on society, this is highlighted by many of their welfare policies such as universal credit and adult disability payment.

Chapter 1 gives analysis of different sociological perspectives, this aims to provide context for the discussion of personal liability. In chapter 2 the debate is widened to consider how structural factors which are outside of the individual's control may be responsible for the situation in which a person finds themselves making "choices".

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Chapter 1 gives analysis of different sociological perspectives, this aims to provide context for the discussion of personal liability. In chapter 2 the debate is widened to consider how structural factors which are outside of the individual's control may be responsible for the situation in which a person finds themselves making "choices".

When discussing the impact of structural factors, it is important to note that there is always a degree of personal agency in all situations as people are not incompetent. Overall, I aim to determine whether poverty is in fact a consequence of individual choices or if it is a consequence of society and structural factors.

Methodology word count:797

I used semi-structured interviews to gain an understanding of how poverty may be more likely to affect different groups. I spoke to charities from my local area, as well as a charity that operates UK wide. I also spoke to the head of the PEF fund at my school. This made my research more valid as I spoke to people both urban and rural based. This allowed me to develop an understanding of poverty and people's situations in my area but also UK wide, meaning I developed a wider picture.

Using semi-structured interviews was positive as I was able to plan my questions ahead, but I also had the opportunity to add in any follow ups or gain clarity on anything said. Additionally, it meant that the answers given were qualitative, so they were more useful in developing my knowledge. However, as the answers were so detailed it was at times difficult to analyse the data and pick out the most relevant parts.

As I live rurally, I did half of my interviews on Zoom. This meant that time and travel were saved for both parties. However, it was often difficult to find a quiet area in school to do the call. I did the other half of my interviews in person. This meant that the interviews ran smoother as there were no technical difficulties, it also felt like more of a comfortable environment as we were physically in the room together.

I created my list of questions beforehand and had someone check them for me. This meant that they were more valid, as being looked over ensured my questions were not biased. However, next time I would have done more reading into each charity

beforehand to ensure that all of my questions were relevant and specific to them and their expertise.

Following our interviews Moray Women's Aid, CPAG and Marc Mcwhirter all emailed me articles that backed their claims. This ensured that the information they relayed to me was reliable as it has been found by experts and researchers.

Before each interview I read my interviewee an ethical statement. This stated why I was speaking to them and what the information they gave would be used for. I also gave them the option to stay anonymous. This meant that they were well informed as to why we were speaking and I have verbal consent from all parties that they were happy to take part. Following my interviews I sent them a transcript of what was said. This meant that they were able to object to anything that I may have misunderstood and request for me to take out anything they were not happy with.

Overall, if I was to do this again I would do more background reading on the factors I was looking into before doing my interviews as it would have helped ensure all of my questions were necessary and fitted in with what research has shown.

During my research I read the books "Crippled" and "The Spirit Level". The Spirit Level highlights the links between inequality and health; both authors are qualified epidemiologists. This means that they are specialists in studying trends in health and population, furthermore indicating that the information they detail should be reliable. Crippled is a book about the inequality disabled people face, the author herself is disabled. This means that she has first-hand experience of the treatment that

disabled people receive, which should mean the information is reliable. However, as it is a very personal topic to her there is likely room for bias.

Both books include appendixes. This means that the information within them should be valid as all facts can be checked to ensure they're true. Books are always peer checked multiple times. Again, this should increase validity as the work has been read by one or multiple others to ensure that it is correct and unbiased.

Both books were over 200 pages long and were packed full of relevant information. This meant that at times I found it difficult to condense down the information and select what to include in my own work.

To remain ethical, I ensured that I properly referenced all of the information that I included. This means that the original author gets the credit for their hard work. Additionally, I ensured that I used the author's work to support the line of argument that they would have followed. This ensured that I was using both of the authors' work in the way they would have intended, not to counter their beliefs.

Overall, if I was to do this again I would take extra care when taking notes and including page numbers, as in the beginning I did not properly keep track of page numbers, this made my referencing a lot more difficult.

To what extent do different sociological perspectives see poverty as a consequence of individual choice?

Word count: 1694

“Responsibility for the consequences of actions is not the price of freedom, but one of its rewards”⁶, believed Charles Murray. This highlights his view that people are fully in control of their own lives and need to be left to make their own mistakes. The new right and functionalists believe that poverty is a consequence of poor individual choices causing the situation. However, collectivist theories such as marxism and psycho-socialism argue that poverty isn't a consequence of individual choice. They would argue poverty is a result of structural factors within society that an individual cannot control. Seeing poverty as an individual choice is important, as it would then suggest that people do not deserve welfare and support for people in poverty should be cut.

Functionalists believe “society is an organic system whose various components work together to contribute to the health of the system”⁷. Durkheim was a functionalist thinker, he saw society as a living structure where everybody has a specific role. However, some roles are naturally more important than others, those in such positions should therefore receive more rewards than those in less important roles. This means that “inequality is an unconsciously established system”⁸ within functionalism and is used to reward those who do jobs that require higher skills such as doctors. However, some may argue that the job of a cleaner is more crucial to

⁶ https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/44279_Charles_Murray , accessed 29/02/2024

⁷Harris Scott R. 2003.

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Scott-Harris-14/publication/238105299_CRITIQUING_AND_EXPANDING_THE_SOCIOLOGY_OF_INEQUALITY_COMPARING_FUNCTIONALIST_CONFLICT_AND_INTERACTIONIST_PERSPECTIVES/links/56292b9b08aef25a243d52dd/CRITIQUING-AND-EXPANDING-THE-SOCIOLOGY-OF-INEQUALITY-COMPARING-FUNCTIONALIST-CONFLICT-AND-INTERACTIONIST-PERSPECTIVES.pdf page 4, accessed 31/10/2023

⁸ibid

society's function than a lawyer, yet the pay gap between the two roles is massive. This links to Davis' and Moore's idea of "occupational stratification"⁹, the fact that some jobs are more functionally important than others. This means that only certain people have the capability to train and take on the responsibilities of highly stratified roles, such as a lawyer. This shows that functionalists view society as a hierarchical system. Gans believed poverty has 15 functions in society¹⁰. One being "poverty helps ensure that the dirty, dangerous, menial and undignified work gets done"¹¹. However, some may highlight the language used as undermining and stigmatising for certain functions. Functionalists also believe society has "dysfunctions"¹²-functions which are harmful. Therefore, is poverty not a dysfunction? Furthermore, functionalists argue that poverty is not removable from society and necessary to motivate people to take up important roles. Moreover, people in poverty are taught through socialisation and institutions to work harder and be smarter, as that is how poverty can be relieved. If roles are left unperformed, Durkheim believed that anomie would occur. This means that society would collapse, there would be no order and no one would not know how to act- society would be chaos. Overall, functionalists believe that poor personal choices are what causes people to be in poverty. This means that choosing to not work hard enough to get a high paying role is a consequence of individual actions. Moreover, they believe the government should only provide enough support to people in poverty that they still feel integrated.

⁹ Harris Scott R. 2003.

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Scott-Harris-14/publication/238105299_CRITIQUING_AND_EXPANDING_THE_SOCIOLOGY_OF_INEQUALITY_COMPARING_FUNCTIONALIST_CONFLICT_AND_INTERACTIONIST_PERSPECTIVES/links/56292b9b08aef25a243d52dd/CRITIQUING-AND-EXPANDING-THE-SOCIOLOGY-OF-INEQUALITY-COMPARING-FUNCTIONALIST-CONFLICT-AND-INTERACTIONIST-PERSPECTIVES.pdf page 5, accessed 31/10/2023

¹⁰Townsend Peter, Poverty in the United Kingdom.London. 1979 page 85

¹¹ ibid

¹²Dmello Natasha. 2021. <https://www.sociologvgroup.com/poverty-perspectives/> . Accessed 13/12/2023

Similar to Functionalism, the new right sees poverty as a result of individual choices. Charles Murray believes that poverty is a result of people being too lazy to work- he refers to this group as the underclass. He believed "poverty is a way of life and is chosen by members of the underclass"¹³. This shows that he sees poverty as a situation that these undesirables have chosen to endure. Moreover, he sees the existence of the Welfare State as an incentive to choose poverty. This means that he thinks it encourages people not to work as they know the benefits system is there. Furthermore, he believes the welfare state punishes the wealthy as they must pay the benefits for this group. He stereotypes those in poverty to be into "drug taking, crime, illegitimacy, failure to hold down a job, truancy from school and casual violence"¹⁴. However, zero evidence is behind this belief. Dahrendorf described the group as a "cancer which eats away at the texture of societies"¹⁵. The language used is similar to functionalist Gans previously mentioned and suggests that the new right does not even see the underclass as people. Moreover, comparing the underclass to a disease highlights their hierarchical outlook on society. The new right perspective is encouraged through UK media, such as the Daily Mail. In December of 2023, 733,577 copies were purchased¹⁶ making it the UK's 2nd largest paper. They portray the idea of "undeserving"¹⁷ poor, normal adults in poverty and "deserving"¹⁸ poor, helpless groups such as children and little old ladies which deserve help. Furthermore, this encourages readers to adopt these ideas of the underclass and to view those struggling in a very right wing manner. Additionally, TV shows like the

¹³ Moore Steven, Aiken Dave and Chapman Steve. Sociology As for AQA. London. 2008. page 144

¹⁴ Murray Charles et al. Charles Murray and the Underclass: the developing debate. London. 1996. page 19

¹⁵

Murray Charles et al. Charles Murray and the Underclass: the developing debate. London. 1996. page 10

¹⁶ Tobitt Charlotte, Aisha Majid. February 2024

https://pressgazette.co.uk/media-audience-and-business-data/media_metrics/most-popular-newspapers-uk-abc-monthly-circulation-figures-2/ . Accessed 29/02/2024

¹⁷ Chase Elaine, Walker Robert. 2012. https://www.spi.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/140530_WP3MediaAnalysisUK.pdf . Accessed 14/12/2023 .page 22

¹⁸ ibid

Jeremy Kyle Show often use unfortunate guests to create "poverty porn"¹⁹. This means that they use guests to play into the "underclass" stereotype and portray life in poverty to meet Murray's ideas of anti-social behaviour. Overall, the new right sees poverty as an individual choice and they believe that less should be done to help those in the situation as they do not deserve it. Furthermore, this mindset encourages people to develop a more right wing and individualistic mindset.

An alternative view is marxism, marxists see poverty as damaging for society. Marxism is a conflict theory, meaning that it views society in terms of struggle between groups. Marx believed that poverty is a consequence of capitalism, as a result society is split into two classes. The bourgeoisie; those who own the means of production and the proletariat; those who work for the bourgeoisie in order to make a living. This means that the two classes oppose each other as the bourgeoisie make their wealth by exploiting the proletariat. Moreover, the proletariat are a key tool in the bourgeoisie's ability to sustain their wealth. This links to the fact that Marx saw capitalism as "wage slavery"²⁰ where workers are given a minimum wage to ensure the rich stay rich. Hence, showing that poverty is often inevitable for the proletariat, it is not based on choice. Marx saw private property ownership as a key driver for inequality. This means that renting/buying homes from the rich makes the poor poorer, and the rich richer. Moreover, it provides an incentive for the proletariat to work harder for the bourgeois and not question the system. Marx believed that to eradicate poverty there must be a revolution where the proletariat join and overthrow the bourgeoisie, causing society to completely reorganise. Furthermore, this has

¹⁹Bown Alfie. 2019 <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/jeremy-kyle-show-capitalism-depression-mark-fisher-a8919841.html> . Accessed 14/12/2023

²⁰ Wright Will. *The Wild West: the mythical cowboy and social theory*. London. 2001. page 84

occurred throughout history and is called "historical materialism"²¹. This means that revolution is why history progresses. The "superstructure"²² is used to protect capitalism. This means that institutions like "culture, norms, politics, religion, ect."²³ are used to mask the exploitative nature of capitalism and make it seem positive for all. Overall, marxists believe poverty is not a consequence of individual choices and that it is a product of our exploitative capitalist society. Moreover, Marx believed workers are "only valuable as labour"²⁴, meaning that groups in poverty are not a concern for the wealthy. In an ideal marxist society, everyone is provided with what they need and people are encouraged to have an outlook based on community and looking out for others.

A final theory is psycho-socialism, this theory links inequality and health. The Spirit Level is an important book in supporting the theory. It quickly states that the more unequal a country is in terms of wealth, the more social issues they will face. This means that after achieving a certain level of wealth, the only way to improve quality of life is by improving mental and physical wellbeing. The UK is wealthier than ever, yet is amongst the most unequal societies on earth. The top 5th of earners possess 63% of the country's wealth whereas the bottom 5th possess only 0.5%²⁵. This shows the unfair distribution of wealth in the UK. Furthermore, it is unsurprising that gaps between groups are widening and social issues are increasing. Those in poverty feel high levels of anxiety, foolishness and insecurity. This means that the group feels stress concerning their situation but also concerning the stigma of around poverty and how others perceive their social status; this is called "social

²¹ Dmello Natasha. 2021. <https://www.sociologypgroup.com/poverty-perspectives/>. Accessed 13/12/2023

²² ibid

²³ ibid

²⁴ Wright Will. *The Wild West: the mythical cowboy and social theory*. London. 2001 page 84

²⁵ The Equality Trust. Scales and Trends. <https://equalitytrust.org.uk/about-inequality/scale-and-trends>

evaluation anxiety"²⁶. Other theories would argue that stigma is good as the shame encourages people to avoid poverty. However, psycho-socialists argue that stigma is harmful and affects the way an individual is viewed by others as well as by themselves. Moreover, if you're being socialised to view yourself negatively then poor mental health is inevitable. An unequal society also impacts the wealthy: "status anxiety"²⁷ creates a constant pressure to remain well off. This means that they purchase more material items to feel further removed from the poor. However, this causes a knock-on "luxury fever"²⁸. This means that the rich owning more, makes the poor want more. Moreover, the poor begin working for material items instead of for family or communal benefits. Consequently, people develop a more individualistic mindset. In an unequal society there is less trust. In Sweden, which is a more equal society, over 60% of people surveyed agreed that "most people can be trusted"²⁹. However, the UK under 40% agreed³⁰. This all shows that the larger a divide between groups, the less trust or community there is across society. Moreover, this creates a sense of suspicion between classes which can lead to increased anxiety and isolation. Furthermore, serious changes need to be made to ensure society's a more comfortable place for everyone. Unlike marxists, psycho-socialists would fix our current societal system through policy, not revolution. Overall, this perspective believes poverty is not a consequence of individual choice, but a consequence of unequal circumstances in society.

In conclusion, I would argue that it is not individual choice causing poverty. Despite both the functionalist and new right perspectives believing it provides motivation and

²⁶ Wilkinson Richard, Pickett Kate. *The Spirit Level*. 2020. London. page 43

²⁷ Wilkinson Richard, Pickett Kate. *The Spirit Level*. 2020. London. page 69

²⁸ Wilkinson Richard, Pickett Kate. *The Spirit Level*. 2020. London. page 70

²⁹ Wilkinson Richard, Pickett Kate. *The Spirit Level*. 2020. London. page 51

³⁰ *ibid*

is unpreventable. Ultimately, I would agree with the marxist and psycho-socialist ideas that poverty is preventable and is only in place because of the structure of our society and the outlook we are all socialised to have. In the future, if society was to take up these views the government would intervene more, benefits would be raised and we would start adopting a collectivist outlook.

To what extent are structural factors outwith a person's control responsible for poverty?

Word count: 1726

The theorists responsible for sculpting the perspectives considered in chapter 1 were often blind to issues faced by people of colour, women and disabled people in UK society. Some more individualistic theories would argue that these structural factors do not hold any responsibility for a person facing poverty. However, more collectivist theories would argue that structural factors out of a person's control such as gender, disability, rurality and ethnicity can be responsible for an increased likelihood of poverty.

Gender, specifically being a woman, has a huge impact on a person's likelihood of poverty. 90% of lone parents are female³¹, and 44% of children in lone parent families experience poverty³². This shows that being a single mother presents many financial challenges, especially as the cost of living continues to increase. Moreover, lone parents must rely on a singular income to support a family, where coupled parent families have double. 70% of lone parents report going hungry/ skipping meals whereas only 55% of coupled parents would³³. This shows that both benefits and wages are not sufficient in allowing people to meet even basic human needs. This means that single parents are expected to care for their children, yet also work the maximum amount of hours to ensure they have enough money to support their family. Moreover, being unable to support a family on a singular income highlights

³¹ Alston Philip 2018. https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Poverty/EOM_GB_16Nov2018.pdf. Accessed 22/11/2023. page 18

³² Child Poverty Action Group. <https://cpag.org.uk/child-poverty/poverty-facts-and-figures>. Accessed 20/22/2023

³³ One Parent Scotland. 2022. https://opfs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/OPFS-Annual_Report_2022.pdf. Accessed 07/12/2023. page 7

the conservative structure of our society, meaning that wages are set at a level for a couple to afford to feed a family, not a lone parent. Only 61% of women are in full time work compared to 68% of men³⁴. This highlights the social stereotype that women in the family should be adopting the caring/domestic role in a household. However, the importance of caring for a child and raising future citizens is not recognised as a central role in society, meaning if a woman chooses to take on the demanding role of a stay-at-home mother they face financial disadvantages, despite having to put in more effort and hours to the job of raising a child than a man in high paying full time work would to their job. Moreover, this leads to the argument that reproductive labour is more demanding than a full time job, and women deserve benefits that allow them to stay at home and do so. Women are most likely to face domestic abuse, 87% of victims reported facing financial exploitation³⁵. This shows that fleeing an abusive situation may leave a woman without a home or savings. The consequences of this may be women remain trapped in abusive situations due to the fear of poverty. Overall, being female provides unequal barriers, limiting choice and makes poverty harder to avoid.

1 in 5 Britons are disabled³⁶ and almost 1 in 2 families in poverty have a disabled member³⁷. A disproportion of disabled people in poverty, but why? Firstly, disability often prevents a person from working. In 2020/21 48% of disabled working age adults were employed compared to 80% of non-disabled³⁸. This means that their

³⁴ White Nicola J. 2023. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/bulletins/genderpaygapintheuk/2023> . Accessed 05/02/2024

³⁵ See appendix 4

³⁶Cebula Carla et al. 2023. <https://www.jrf.org.uk/work/uk-poverty-2023-the-essential-guide-to-understanding-poverty-in-the-uk> accessed 21/11/2023. page 65

³⁷ Alston Philip. 2018. https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Poverty/EOM_GB_16Nov2018.pdf . Accessed 22/11/2023. page 18

³⁸ Cebula Carla et al. 2023. <https://www.jrf.org.uk/work/uk-poverty-2023-the-essential-guide-to-understanding-poverty-in-the-uk> . Accessed 21/11/2023., page 67

ability to work is severely decreased. British media often push the idea that disabled people use their condition as an excuse not to work. However, others may argue that the disabled desire to work, but can't. Furthermore, leading us to question whether more should be done to accommodate disabled people in the workplace. The extra costs of being disabled such as specialist equipment, causes knock-on costs such as expensive electricity bills. This shows that people with a disability are often unable to work, yet expected to be able to cover extra costs associated with their disability. This leads people to turn to disability benefits. However, there are many issues with the disability welfare system. Horror stories of people who were failed by the system include: one woman being forced to live off cereal and starve to death³⁹ and another washing her clothes in a bucket⁴⁰. This suggests that disabled people are at the bottom of the pile to receive any help and are continuously cast aside and ignored. Moreover, this highlights that the people in charge of benefits do not know or care about the conditions disabled people have to face, as the able-bodied politicians writing the legislation do not take the cries of disabled people seriously. In 2008 disability benefits were cut by £10 million⁴¹. This means that the already tiny benefits were reduced further. One recipient described a "double edged sword of disability benefits"⁴². This means people were more likely to require loans to live yet less likely to be able to pay them back. This links to a previous point about disabled people having more challenges to face, yet less finance to overcome them. Overall, it is clear that disabled people are a last priority to receive any welfare, despite many people being physically unable to work. Furthermore, people with disabilities are

³⁹ Ryan Frances. Crippled austerity and demonization of disabled people. London. 2019/2020. page 13

⁴⁰ Ryan Frances. Crippled austerity and demonization of disabled people. London. 2019/2020. pages 16 and 17

⁴¹ Ryan Frances. Crippled austerity and demonization of disabled people. London. 2019/2020. page 16

⁴² Ryan Frances. Crippled austerity and demonization of disabled people. London. 2019/2020., page 33

being pushed into poverty through the lack of ability to earn and the failure of the government to provide even basic support.

Philip Alston described rural poverty as “particularly harsh”⁴³. In a rural area poverty is harder to detect. In terms of SIMD measurement “you can have a huge variety in the area of the conditions and the family situations that young people are living in even though they are in the same SIMD area”⁴⁴. This shows that families may slip under the radar and therefore it is harder to provide the correct support. Moreover, if people are too ashamed to reach out then it is very easy for a family’s situation to deteriorate. Transport issues are highlighted as a driver for rural poverty. “If you live in this general area your ability to get a job relies on the ability to drive and own a car”⁴⁵. This means that without a car it is harder to work, without work poverty is almost inevitable. However, the cost of fuel to reach a workplace may cancel out the financial gain of a job. This leads people to seek public transport. However in very rural areas “the buses to our largest local towns with all of the shops are very few and far between”⁴⁶. This means that people are unable to rely on a bus for regular transport, therefore preventing them from committing to work. Furthermore, this may lead to isolation as people are stuck in their rural homes, unable to regularly leave. The UK’s benefits system has gone “digital by default”⁴⁷ and benefits must be claimed online. However, only 47%⁴⁸ of the lowest earning households have internet access at home. Furthermore, due to transport issues it is difficult for rural residents

⁴³ Alston Philip. 2018. https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Poverty/EOM_GB_16Nov2018.pdf . Accessed 22/11/2023. page 20

⁴⁴See appendix 5

⁴⁵ ibid

⁴⁶ See appendix 5

⁴⁷ Alston Philip. 2018. https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Poverty/EOM_GB_16Nov2018.pdf . Accessed 22/11/2023. page 6

⁴⁸ Alston Philip. 2018. https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Poverty/EOM_GB_16Nov2018.pdf . Accessed 22/11/2023. page 8

to travel to facilities where they can access the internet. To try and aid rural poverty, Moray Food Plus's "mobile pantry"⁴⁹ called "Big Blue goes to about 30 villages, places that do not have shops"⁵⁰. This allows increased access to food and saves on travel costs. Moreover, this is a positive way of bringing a rural community together by gathering at "Big Blue"⁵¹, helping to reduce the isolation aspect of rurality. MFP did a "shopping basket comparison"⁵² between Elgin and Tomintoul. "The cheapest basket in Elgin was £7 something. In Tomintoul it was £17 something"⁵³. This shows that the cost of food in rural areas is over double urban. This suggests that prices are risen as rural shops take advantage of people's lack of options. Moreover, this shows that living rurally provides many extra costs that people living in urban areas do not face.

2 in 5 black people in the UK face poverty compared to 1 in 5 white⁵⁴. With black people being a minority of the population this is very concerning. However, the highest rates of poverty are in Bangladeshi and Pakistani groups with 51% and 44%⁵⁵. This shows that institutional racism is leading to discrimination, explaining the high rates of ethnic minorities in poverty. This means that society is socialised to see people of colour as being of less value/skill than white people. The consequence of this outlook is that society develops a hierarchical outlook, which is likely to encourage people's thinking to become right wing and individualistic. 10.5% of black women are in 0 hour contracts whereas only 2.5% of white women are⁵⁶. This means

⁴⁹See appendix 2

⁵⁰ ibid

⁵¹ ibid

⁵² ibid

⁵³ ibid

⁵⁴ Cebula Carla et al. 2023. <https://www.irf.org.uk/work/uk-poverty-2023-the-essential-guide-to-understanding-poverty-in-the-uk>. Accessed 21/11/2023. page 59

⁵⁵ ibid

⁵⁶ Cebula Carla et al. 2023. <https://www.irf.org.uk/work/uk-poverty-2023-the-essential-guide-to-understanding-poverty-in-the-uk>. Accessed 21/11/2023. page 61

that families are provided little security as these contracts can include inconsistent and anti-social shift patterns. Furthermore, this highlights a societal stereotype that people of colour work in low paid industries. Asylum seekers face extra barriers as “destitution is built into the asylum system”⁵⁷. People receive the bare minimum such as a home, yet families are receiving under £5 a day to live off⁵⁸. This means that help for asylum seekers is deliberately low in order to keep them vulnerable while they await a status upgrade. This again shows institutional racism is deliberately keeping a group struggling, this treatment may put people off seeking asylum in the UK. On the one hand, this may be what the government intends, as they have publicly spoken negatively of immigration. However, immigration is very valuable and discouraging it is likely to have a harmful effect on society, it may lead to less multiculturalism and an increased white supremacy mindset. Asylum seekers “cannot get access to benefits; they can only access support through the asylum system and that is very little money”⁵⁹. This further shows that people fleeing to the UK aren’t viewed as people by the government as the help offered is a joke and is in no universe enough to survive off. This highlights similarities to treatment of disabled people; dehumanising and the government seeing themselves as above them. Overall, Alston argued that “the government promotes work as the solution to poverty, yet refuses to allow this particular group to work”⁶⁰. This highlights the fact that the system is contradicting and changes must be made as the treatment of this group is dehumanising and not good enough.

⁵⁷ Alston Philip. 2018. https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Poverty/EOM_GB_16Nov2018.pdf . Accessed 22/11/2023. page 19

⁵⁸ *ibid*

⁵⁹ See appendix 1

⁶⁰ Alston Philip. 2018. https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Poverty/EOM_GB_16Nov2018.pdf . Accessed 22/11/2023. page 19

In conclusion, all of these factors have an impact on a person's likelihood of poverty, none of which are the individual's fault. Though, it is important to note that there is always a degree of personal agency to people's situations. However, the factors discussed clearly have the potential to be impactful. Overall, Philip Alston was correct in stating "the costs of austerity have fallen disproportionately upon the poor, women, racial and ethnic minorities, children, single parents and people with disabilities"⁶¹.

⁶¹ Alston Philip. 2018. https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Poverty/EOM_GB_16Nov2018.pdf . Accessed 22/11/2023. page 18

Conclusion word count: 521

All theories suggest different reasons for poverty and have differing ideas on whether personal choice is involved. Functionalists believe people are choosing not to work hard enough to be financially better off and improve their place in society's structure. Functionalists argue poverty is not removable in society, this has a certain degree of truth behind it. In our current society and with current legislation the existence of poverty is inevitable, however, if true measures were taken to amend societal structure and create equality, then poverty could be completely removed. The new right believes that people are choosing to be lazy, not work, and live on benefits likely to apply to some members of society. However, this mind-set is very rare- poverty is a horrific situation, not one that most would choose. Marxists believe poverty is not an individual choice, but a situation pushed upon people by our exploitative, capitalist society. Unlike functionalists, they believe that poverty can be removed by a revolution of the workers against the owners. On the one hand, starting over would create an equal and better society for all. However, on the other hand it could be argued that revolution would likely require violence, this is likely not a practical solution for all. For example, psycho-socialists would suggest serious changes in legislation and removing the divide between groups. Psycho-socialists believe that poverty is not a consequence of poor individual choices, but is a consequence of the unequal conditions in our society today and the massive gap between the richest and the poorest which enforces social issues in society.

Looking at the effect structural factors have on many groups across society, brings us to the conclusion that poverty is not a consequence of individual choices. All of

the impacting factors discussed limited choice available to people- making poverty at times the only option. Gender based factors often leave women with double or triple the barriers to overcome within their lives, similarly, rurality provides a large number of extra costs and barriers for an individual to overcome in order to live a "normal" life. Both people with disabilities and of ethnic minorities have been majorly let down by legislation in the UK, many go ignored and without the help these groups needed to even survive.

From this, we can see that in the future people need to be involved in decision making. It is well known that parliament in the UK is lacking representation of all societal groups that are not rich, white men. Despite what marxists or functionalists may say, legislation is powerful and positive changes can be made if the legislation is educated and perspectives from all affected groups are accounted for. We have seen this on an international level as methods used in Porto Alegre incorporating all voices within a community have quickly and massively changed conditions in the city. We are already seeing examples in Scotland as well with the Dundee Decides scheme using participatory democracy to amplify the voices of those most impacted by issues who usually go unheard. Overall, in the future poverty in Scotland can be eliminated and a new and equal country can be built if those in poverty are listened to and those in positions of wealth make an effort to see other perspectives and adopt a more collectivist outlook.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Interview with **Early Warning System Project Manager (Scotland),**
Child Poverty Action Group. Interviewed by **on 22nd of November 2023 at**
10:45am via zoom meeting.
Transcribed by **and checked by**

- Before I start I have an ethical statement to read to you so that you know why I am speaking to you and what the information is being used for.

All of the information is going towards my dissertation, the title is poverty is a consequence of individual choice, but I am hoping to disprove that. I am splitting it into two sections, sociological theories on poverty and circumstances out of people's control that may lead to them being in poverty- which is why I am interviewing you. This interview is being recorded as you know, and as long as it is ok with you I will be using the recording to type up a transcript.

- Yes, that's absolutely grand.

- When finished, I will give u a copy of my dissertation to read before I send it away for marking. It will just be read by my teacher and the SQA who will be marking it. I will also be showing a copy to other organisations I am interviewing.

- Yes, of course.

- anything said that you want me to keep confidential, or if you do not want me to use yours or your charity's name I will of course not include any of that.

- No, I am happy for you to attribute anything to me or to us it is ok.

- If you have any issues with my dissertation when you read it I can of course make changes.

- Ok cool, I look forward to seeing it!

- Ok, that's all I need to say so that you understand why I am doing this. So I will now start on my questions if that's ok!

- Of course.

- My first question is just can you tell me a little bit more about what you guys do?

- Yes, of course. So, we are a charity. We've got two sides to the organisation within our office. We have people who provide advice and information on welfare benefits to other organisations. So if someone were to go into a citizens advice bureau and say I've got a problem with my benefits, the person at the bureau might not know what to do with that. So,

they can then contact us and say we've got this person in front of us, we're not quite sure what to do, can you give me some information. So, we are quite a small team, but because we do not deal with people directly we are able to provide information to all of Scotland.

Then, the other side of things is we have our policy team. Our policy team is trying to come up with policies and suggestions, for the Scottish Government, national UK Government, for local authorities about what they can do to help reduce and eradicate child poverty. My job is kind of the inbetween, I look at what's coming through our advice work to inform what we do through our policy work. The idea with the benefits side of things is that if everybody got what benefits they were entitled to then that would help eradicate child poverty. Although that used to be the case, now the benefits don't stretch far enough to make that the case anymore.

- So, would you say you more commonly came across families that may have lone parents?

- So, we don't deal with families directly but the information we do get coming through our advice line is yes, lots of families will have a lone parent in them.

- Ok, and from what you know would you say it was more lone mothers, or lone fathers or a similar mix of both?

- From what we know, and we work closely with an organisation called One Parent Family Scotland, we know that usually about 9/10 single parents are women and 1/10 will be dads.

- Do you deal with any children or families that may be escaping violent situations?

- Yes. So, it may either be that somebody may have experienced domestic abuse. It is really difficult to leave domestic abuse because you might not have the money to do so, that is where the benefit system quite often comes into things. Just a couple of weeks ago the First Minister announced a fund to help people leave domestic abuse and that came through our evidence that we had coming through our advice line and along with a couple of other organisations like Scottish Women's Aid and Ingender to say we see that is very difficult for people to escape domestic abuse and they need financial help to do that. That is where that came from. It is very difficult for people who might not be UK nationals and who might not have the same rights to access the benefits system. Then, that might mean that somebody needs to leave domestic abuse but has not got any money to support them at all and has not got any right to access any money that might support them to do that.

- So, would you say that domestic abuse may make families more unstable and possibly contribute towards ending up in poverty?

- Yes, definitely. If you think, you could be in a relationship with somebody and have quite a stable family life, you could be very well off. But, if you aren't the person who has access to the bank accounts and if you weren't earning the money for yourself. Then, there is a good chance that if you leave that situation you're not going to have any money and you're going to have to start again from the beginning.

- Would you say this is more women facing this or men?

- I think the statistics will show that it is more women that experience domestic abuse. It's not to say that men don't, it's just definitely more of a problem for women.

- Would you say that children growing up in poverty are less likely to have the same opportunities when they grow up as children from more stable, wealthy backgrounds?

- We know from some of our statistics that being in poverty will put children at a disadvantage. So, it is things like children who experience poverty, even before they go to school, they might not have the same language levels as children who have come from a wealthy background. There is also the attainment gap in school, that is to do with poverty. Then, when children leave school we know that child poverty will have an impact on what they then go on to do. Again, it is not to say that if you are in child poverty that your life is over. It just shows that statistically, you're having to fight against a tide really.

- So, where I live and my school is in a very rural area. There is a lot of rurality and a lot of people are living quite isolated meaning rural poverty is definitely an issue I have witnessed. Would you say that being located in a rural area would make a child possibly more likely to end up in poverty?

- We certainly know that there are high instances of poverty in some rural areas. We know that some of the reasons for that are like, lack of public transport, lack of childcare and lack of job opportunities. All of those things create a perfect storm to make it quite difficult for people to find work and then to be able to afford to work. Travelling a long way to work has a cost involved and if you have to travel to drop your child off somewhere, that has implications as well. We know that there are cases where fuel costs are much higher in rural areas as well.

- Would you say families facing poverty that live in really rural areas would be more likely to go undetected as they are so isolated?

- Yes, I think so. That is quite possible, yes.

- Would you say that people of ethnicities other than white British would face a higher likelihood of falling into poverty?

- Yes, we know from the statistics that that is the case. Again, there may be different reasons for that. Their language may be a barrier to finding employment, discrimination too definitely is an issue. We also know that some families from different cultural backgrounds may have larger families and if parents work, especially mums, they will be more likely to work around school hours and have the primary role of being the caregiver.

- Do you work with any children or families who may be asylum seekers or immigrants?

- Yes. Asylum seekers are people that have come into the UK and are awaiting refugee status. They cannot get access to benefits; they can only access support through the asylum

system and that is very very little money. That is below even the basic rates of benefits and not enough for people to live on. If somebody is successful with that, they become a refugee and then refugees have the same rights to benefits as UK nationals. But, they have much more difficulty accessing them while still having the same rights. It is much harder to get them.

- Is there any specific support to people in those situations, to help them claim the benefits and live more stably?

- It depends on where they have come from. If someone has come from Ukraine or Afghanistan, then there is a lot of support in place for the integration process to help people settle in the UK. But, for people who have come from outside those areas who are still trying to seek asylum then there might be a little bit of support but not very much. We know that the Scottish Refugee Council does a lot of work with families to try and help them access benefits and so does the Red Cross.

- Would you say that you commonly see a lot of families with either a child or adult with a disability seeking your help?

- Yes. Again, that is another one that you are more likely to be in poverty if someone in the family has a disability. This might mean that there is a disabled child or a disabled adult. If it is an adult, it may make it harder to work or harder work full time. It may mean that someone in the household might need to stay at home and care for that disabled person. Again, with children it is really difficult to get suitable childcare for disabled children. That again may mean that parents might have an additional caring responsibility and additional costs.

- Is there any policies in place to help families that have either a child or adult with disabilities?

- Yes, so an adult can claim an Adult Disability Payment in Scotland. An adult can also claim child disability payment for a child as well and that is money that is available. No one looks at your bank account to see how much money you have, it is the government recognizing that because you are disabled you have extra costs you will need help with so we are going to give you this money. As well as that, some adults may be able to claim carers allowance or get an additional amount in Universal Credit. In Scotland, if you get a carers allowance you will also get an additional top up from the government as they recognised that the allowance wasn't enough to cover costs so they decided to pay it a little higher.

- Would you say that these payments are enough to support people or are they insufficient in helping families remain stable?

- So, what has happened over the last 10/13 years is that benefits have not gone up at the same rate as the cost of living. That makes it much harder for the money to go as far as it needs to. This means it has got much harder for people to stretch their money. In general, benefits haven't increased and that is making people worse off. It is one of the biggest causes of pushing people into poverty.

- Through a lot of my research for my dissertation, as well as through part of my course I have come across a lot of stuff about the 2010 Child Poverty Act and then it obviously was changed in 2015. Do you think this act is helping people or is it not enough?

- So, that is a UK act. So, in Scotland we now have the Child poverty Scotland act so that is worth having a look at because it has placed duties on the Scottish government to have targets, to reduce child poverty, to report on the targets. They have to report on the targets this year I think, and then again in 2030. These have made a difference in Scotland because it means that the Scottish government has to do things in order to try and do things in order to try and reach those targets. Things like the Scottish child payment do you know about?

- Yes, I think so.

- So, it was a new benefit introduced by the Scottish government to be paid for children and it is £25 a week. That was specifically introduced to try and lift children out of poverty and that is partly because the act is there. The act also meant that there was a duty for the Scottish government to produce a tackling child poverty delivery plan, that's available on the Scottish government website. Really good in terms of what causes poverty and what the Scottish government are doing in relation to tackling poverty. It also puts duties on local authorities to do things to tackle child poverty as well and report on what they're doing. So, the act in Scotland is really good. The act in the UK that you are talking about, means there are no child poverty targets anymore that the government have to report on or work towards and I think that has been disastrous at UK level. If you look at child poverty rates in England, compared to Scotland the trajectory looks like hopeful things will start coming down in Scotland next year but things in England seem to be going up the way. That is partly about the fact that we have an act and they don't anymore.

- You mentioned the Scottish Government setting targets, and they are set to review them this year. So, are they meeting their targets?

- This is quite a difficult question, as on the face of things it looks like they have not met the targets this year or that they've just skimmed past them. But, what we think is that next year we will see that child poverty has reduced, or certainly we hope that it will. We think they have not quite met the targets this year; partly because there is a lag, the Scottish Child Payment was increased and rolled out to all children under 16 at the end of last year. So, that does not show up in this year's targets yet. However, it will show up in next year's figures and then we will start to see how much of a difference that is making. What we would say though is that we are not on target at the moment to reach the targets in 2030. More needs to be done in order to reach them.

- I see. Through the more sociological theories side of my research I have come across a lot of stuff about how the media unfairly represents children and families in poverty. Would you agree that the representation is unfair?

- I think it is unjust and really damaging because politicians will do what they think the people voting for them want. I think if more people came out and said it is terrible that all of

these people are in poverty and we really must help and support people and make sure child care is there, that there is access to better jobs, make sure that any social security pays well then politicians would do that. But I think the fact that newspapers say horrible things about people on benefits and people in poverty means that people will read that and sometimes believe it and sometimes support the government to do things that actually aren't very nice. I don't know if you know that today is the UK budget, so the chancellor will announce his financial plans for the UK over the next year. One of the things that he is talking about doing and we are waiting to see if he announces it, is that he may cut benefits even more. That is because he thinks that is what people want and that is because newspapers have told people that, that's what they think they want.

- Another stereotype pushed by the media is that a lot of the reasons for children being in poverty is due to their parents being unemployed or the phrase "workless" is used a lot. Would you say this is the case with people you deal with? Or are most people either employed or trying to seek employment?

- We know from the statistics that 69% of children who are in poverty have at least one parent in work. That parent is working and yet the family is still in poverty and I think that just goes to show that work isn't a route out of poverty anymore. That is to do with things like the rise in insecure employment like zero-hour contracts, jobs where you do not know how many hours you will have to work and how much you will get paid. Really low paid work as well.

- You've mentioned the government and their policies, do you guys as a charity work alongside the government?

- Yes we do. We work really closely with the Scottish government and we work closely with many different departments in the Scottish government. There is the tackling child poverty directorate, we also have contact with the childcare directorate and the social security directorate and that will be for Scottish benefits and how Scottish benefits link up with UK benefits because some are delivered by the UK government and some are delivered by the Scottish government. So yes, we do work very closely with them and talk about what we are seeing, how things are working and what we think might help, what ideas do we have to help reduce poverty. We also have an office in London and our colleagues in London will work more closely with the UK government but we will talk to them about what we are seeing or doing so that we can make sure that we are helping to inform that work as well.

- Well, thank you very much for answering my questions. I have one final question; are there any other sources that you could recommend to me to help further my research. I have already noted the Child Poverty Scotland Act and the Child Poverty Delivery Plan.

- Yes, I will send you those and I will also send you links to the child poverty statistics so that you can take a note of them as well. Other places that may be quite good to have a look at may be One Parent Family Scotland and I will have a think about any others as well and let you know.

- Perfect! Thank you so much for speaking to me. When I have written my dissertation and have a final draft I will send it over for you to read.

I look forward to it. Any questions at all while you are writing it up feel free to give me an email.

☺️ ↩️ Reply ↶️ Reply all ↷️ Forward 📧 ...

To:

Wed 15/11/2023 12:45

Dear

Hello, I am [redacted] and I am currently in s6 at [redacted] in the north of Scotland. Through my Advanced Higher Modern Studies course I am completing a dissertation and my chosen topic is looking into different reasons for an individual being in poverty. One of the sections is looking at circumstances out of an individual's control that may lead to poverty. This is why I am contacting you. I am wondering if I would be able to set up an interview or conversation with you in order to gain some understanding of the work you are doing to help people and the circumstances that lead people to seek your help. Ideally this would take place online. If this is possible please would you be able to respond and we can arrange a time to speak. Thank you for your time and I look forward to learning more about what you do.

KM

To:

☺️ ↩️ Reply ↶️ Reply all ↷️ Forward 📧 ...

Wed 15/11/2023 14:54

Hi

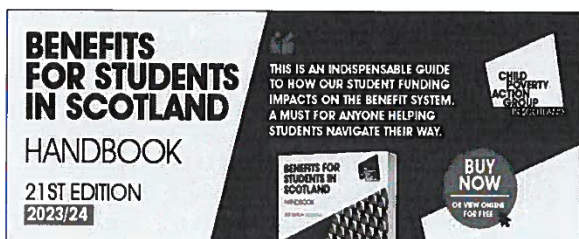
I would be happy to talk to you about this.
When would suit you?

Online would be grand – do you have a preference for Zoom or MS Teams or something else?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes

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😊 ↩ Reply ↶ Reply all ↷ Forward 📧

To: Thu 16/11/2023 15

Hello, thank you for getting back to me! Tuesdays are usually quite free for me so anytime on a Tuesday would be perfect, especially the morning. Mondays and Wednesdays are also quite free for me so anytime on either of those days I could also make work. Zoom would be really good if you could manage that. Thank you very much for your help.

...

...

😊 ↩ Reply ↶ Reply all ↷ Forward 📧 ...

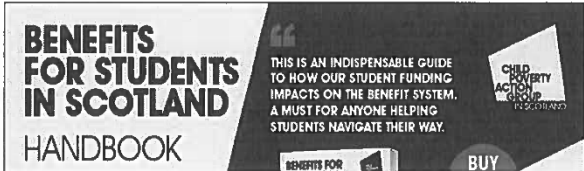
M To: Thu 16/11/2023 16:00

Hi

Is there a time this Tuesday afternoon – 21st November or Wednesday morning – 22nd November – that would suit you? I'd be happy to set up a Zoom meeting

Best wishes

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😊 ↩ Reply ↶ Reply all ↷ Forward 📧 ...

To: Mon 20/11/2023 12:11

Hello, would 10:45 on Wednesday morning work for you? Thank you.

...

KM ☺ Reply Reply all Forward [] ...
To: Mon 20/11/2023 12:20

Hi I

Yes that would be grand – I've set up at zoom meeting for us. Give me a call if you have any problems getting in

is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: My Meeting
Time: Nov 22, 2023 10:45 AM London

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/77046077540?pwd=Of03fdRwS1glwzACYuSE35XFQNVuED.1>

Meeting ID: 770 4607 7540
Passcode: ZRv4wp

Best wishes

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☺ Reply Reply all Forward [] ...
To: Mon 20/11/2023 12:27

Perfect!! Thank you, I look forward to speaking to you.

...

 To: | ☺ Reply ↶ Reply all → Forward 📎 ...
Wed 22/11/2023 16:44

Hi

It was lovely to meet you earlier. Here are some links to further information as promised

CPAG website
<https://cpag.org.uk/scotland/child-poverty/facts>
<https://cpag.org.uk/scotland/child-poverty/cause>
<https://cpag.org.uk/scotland/child-poverty/what-needs-be-done>

Child poverty stats
<https://data.gov.scot/poverty/index.html#Children>

Child poverty summary
<https://data.gov.scot/poverty/cpupdate.html>

Tackling child poverty delivery plan
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/best-start-bright-futures-tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-2022-26/>

If you have any questions, please feel free to get back in touch

Best wishes

☺ Reply ↶ Reply all → Forward 📎 ...

To: Thu 29/02/2024 15:15

Hello! This is we did an interview for my advanced higher modern studies dissertation a couple of months ago. I am just getting in touch as I am almost finished writing my dissertation (finally!). Before I finalise everything, I realised I did not ever send over a transcript of our interview, so I have attached it here. If you have any issues with anything said or if I have misunderstood anything please let me know 😊 If not then I will send you my final copy over within the next few weeks, yay!

 [Child Poverty Action Group Interview.pdf](#)

↶ Reply ↷ Forward

Appendix 2

Interview with _____, project manager, Moray food Plus. Interviewed by _____ on 23rd of November 2023 at 2:30 pm via zoom meeting. Transcribed by Isla Belford and checked by _____

- Thank you for speaking to me, before I ask you any questions I will explain to you what I am doing and why I am speaking with you. It is all for my advanced higher modern studies dissertation. The title of my dissertation is "poverty is a consequence of individual choice", but I do not agree with this and the whole point of my dissertation is basically disproving this statement. My dissertation is split into two sections; the first of which is looking at different sociological perspectives on poverty and the second section is about the circumstances outside a person's control that may lead to them being in poverty or increase their likelihood. This is obviously why I am speaking to you. So, I will record this interview and type up a transcript but if anything said you do not want me to include or if it is confidential I will not put it in. If you do not want me to say your name or your charities name I also do not have to do that.

- No it is fine, if I was to give you an example it would just be general.

- It will only be read by my teacher and then will be sent to the SQA to be marked. Before I send it away I will send you and the other people I have spoken to a copy of my dissertation to make sure that you are ok with everything that I have said.

- Yes, ok.

- Perfect. I have had a look at the powerpoint you sent me so I have a little background knowledge on what you guys do but would you be able to explain to me a little bit more about what you guys do at Moray Food Plus.

- Yes, so basically our core service is a food bank. We provide food bank service across the whole of Moray but we are a little bit different than the food banks that you tend to see on the TV, as on the TV people drop in, pick up food and can have a chat. But, because we cover such a large area which is very rural we don't expect people from Buckie or Tommintoul to come to Elgin to pick up their parcel. So, the bulk of our work is actually we deliver. So, we either deliver to referral agencies or we have got some agreed collection points like Buckie Library and Forres Community Centre or we do a direct home delivery as well.

So, we are an independent food bank and we are part of the Independent Food Aid Network but we used to be a Trussell Trust foodbank so we kind of follow their lists. Most food banks have the same list of items that they give out. We don't really give out much fresh produce, again because we do not know how long a bag can be sitting in a referral agency for. So if we put in milk and cheese it could be sitting next to a radiator and it could go off. It is usually ambient and dry food that we give out. We do give out cold parcels, these are for people that don't have electricity. These tend to be bread, cheese, cold meat and that sort of thing that we put in so they do not have to cook. We also do some quick cook parcels; these may have

things like cup-a-soups and pot noodles where people just need a kettle because we are finding that more and more people are wanting to use less electricity. So that is the foodbank service. We are very much supported by volunteers for that side of our service. We have 5 or 6 volunteers every day making up the referrals and we have about 3 drivers a day dealing with all of the deliveries.

As an organisation we used to be called Community Food Moray and we were focused on nutrition, but the food bank side really took over so we evolved and became Moray Food Bank. Then, we wanted to start addressing some of the underlying issues around why people were coming to the food bank and provide some support. So, we developed a lot of projects and became Moray Food Plus.

One of the first things we did was we worked with partner agencies to set up larders. We were aware that the likes of people in homeless accommodation may get accommodated at 5pm and we are obviously closed then meaning that they won't have any food. It is really providing the same food that would go in a food parcel but it is available on sight for people. It is still free but it is on site. It just means that they have more flexibility around when they can access it and for the staff it is good as it helps them engage with residents. They can just go to their door, check up on them, ask if they need any food. For some of the teenagers that perhaps have not learnt to cook, they can display food in such a way that they can realise what they can make and what goes together. We also do food recovery, that is taking surplus food from supermarkets. A lot of other food banks will use that food in their parcels, but we don't. We use that in a different way. We distribute that to partner organisations, we have around 30 organisations that we support that way. It may be the likes of Step By Step. They quite often use it to make lunch so that the families there can have lunch. Other organisations like Criminal Justice may pass it on to their clients so they get a little extra support. Then, we also pass it on to pantries.

Such as the likes of Big Blue, this is our big mobile pantry. Big Blue goes to about 30 villages, places that do not have shops, it is about addressing food access. Before covid we had done a food poverty action plan, as part of the consultation we did a shopping basket comparison and found that at that point the cheapest basket was in Elgin at £7 something. In Tomintoul it was £17 something so it really raised the issue that if you live rurally you have the choice of shopping locally and spending a lot more on your food or having to travel. But, obviously you have got travel costs to come somewhere to get cheaper food. So, we developed the pantry which takes food out to the villages. We also do a bit of outreach there as well, we do some activities and things like that. We do family resilience work, which is one-to-one work with families and then we also do supper clubs, parenting groups and that sort of thing. We have the Bosie which is our family centre, this has been running for about a year. We call it a family centre but we do work with all ages of people from nursery right up to older people. We do cooking activities, craft activities and again we have parenting groups and clubs. We work in partnership with Criminal Justice to help support them to develop their growing site. So, we have a member of staff that goes down a couple of times a week working with some volunteers just to develop the growing sight. That product supports a lot of the third sector organisations and it goes to some of the Criminal Justice clients and then goes to places like Big Blue and the Bosie as well for it to be used. We also do community meals, we work with groups that may be facing social isolation and community meals are quite a good thing to bring people together and we always do it pay what you feel or free. At

the moment we are working with St John's church in Forres doing an after school supper club fortnightly. That is free for families to come along to. That is pretty much most of what we do. We also have a money advice service. Again, although there are money advice services in Moray we are aware that there may quite often be barriers for some of our food bank clients to access those services. This made us want to set up our own money advice service, just to help people access money that they are maybe entitled to.

- That is amazing. I think it is really good you mentioned a lot of stuff about rurality as it is one of the 4 main factors I am looking at in my research about circumstances that may cause someone to be in poverty. The other ones I am looking at are gender, ethnicity and disability, so most of my questions are centred around these. I will now start on a few of my questions if that is ok.

- Of course.

- Would you say that you would more commonly see men or women seeking your help, or would you say it is an equal mix of both?

- It is kind of both. We have a lot of families, but we also have a lot of single parent families that do tend to be women. We get a lot of single men, but we also get a lot of men that maybe get their children on weekends. So, if you look at that stats, we do give a lot of our stats to the Moray Council and they use them in a lot of their reporting. An example may be that we get quite a high percentage of men with children in Keith but that is not reflected in the Moray Council stats and that was purely men that get their children at weekends and in holidays so they come to us to get support, but they are not really recorded anywhere else. That is something that is hidden in a way, the men that have children but not all of the time but they do not get the financial support when they have them.

- Have you had to deal with people seeking help after leaving abusive circumstances and maybe having to completely start over?

- Yes, because we work mostly through referral agencies we do get quite a few referrals from the likes of Moray Women's Aid and we are aware of people that get accommodated in temporary accommodation that have come from abusive relationships and they are starting from nothing. There are however other organisations that can support them with that. With us, the focus really is on the food but of course there are other factors that need to be considered. For example, children leave with no toys and there are other organisations that support with other things.

- Would you say being a lone parent would make it harder to move out of poverty or at least into a more stable situation?

- We do see a lot of people in work that need food support and there are a lot of families that maybe do have joint income coming in. I really think the cost of living has just gone up so much that it is affecting everybody so it is not necessarily a lone parent over a more traditional family, it is just to do with your level of income.

- My next question was going to be do you think rurality restricts people's access to shops and basic needs but you have already touched on the fact that yes, that is the case.

- Yes. What we have found is the advantages that Big Blue has. Big Blue only goes to a place maybe once a fortnight or once a month so people are not reliant on it to get their shopping. But, it does provide a top up shop for them. Whereas, it is quite easy for me as there is a shop at the bottom of my street. If I forget to buy milk I can just nip down and get it. But, if you live in a very rural area you can't do that. Big Blue lets people get that small shop in between the bigger shops and they don't have to travel such a distance just to get a loaf of bread and milk, they can get that from big blue. Coming back to the rural isolation aspect, the surprising outcome of Big Blue has been people see it as a focal point now in their villages where years ago it used to have the mobile grocer and it has kind of gone back to that. A lot of people are going to Big Blue and they are meeting their neighbours and having a chat while they are getting their shopping. It is not so bad now, but when we first did our shopping basket comparison it was probably about 2018 I think. The difference between the towns and the rural areas is very high. Since covid, shops have opened in a lot more places. The COOP is a slightly more expensive shop but if you get your membership prices and things like that it is still cheaper than the likes of a corner shop or having to travel. So, it is not quite as bad as it has been but there are still a lot of places that do not have access to food. It costs people a lot when they have to go by public transport, we get a lot of people that rely on taxis to get their messages as well, so it does have quite a significant impact.

- I was actually about to ask do you believe the ability to own a car would restrict people, but you have basically just explained it definitely would.

- I think having a car is obviously beneficial because it gives you a bit more freedom and choice. But, there is the cost of running that car. This is another thing, fuel prices have gone up quite significantly over the last couple of years and just in general running a car costs a lot more now. I think it is very hard to live in a properly rural place without a car because the public transport is very limited and is expensive.

- Obviously up where we are in Moray there is not a lot of diversity, but would you say that you've seen a disproportionate amount of people from ethnic minorities seeking your services.

- We do not have that many people of ethnic backgrounds, most of the people who come through us are asylum seekers, who are from Afghan families or Syrian but it is a very very small number. We have supported more Ukrainian people in comparison. We do have some people from ethnic backgrounds come to us but it is a very small number.

- Well, in the powerpoint presentation you sent me the other day it mentioned helping a lot of people that have got a disability in the family. Why do you think it is that more people with a disability are having to seek your help?

- I think it limits your work ability in a way if you're either caring for somebody or not able to work and the benefits that you get aren't really enough. Or, if you have a disability yourself Moray does not have that many opportunities for employment anyway. Then if you add having a disability onto that you are very limited. Moray is a part time, low earning economy

anyway so it is hard. You may have additional costs around your disability. So, transport could be more of an issue for you or general costs such as your electricity being harder because you might have to keep your house warmer or you might have to recharge your electric wheelchair or you might need additional equipment all of the time. Your ability to earn is lower than other people yet your costs are probably higher.

- Would you say you see the impact of the mental health issues associated with poverty or instability that may cause people to need help from you guys as well?

Mairi- Yes, we do have a lot of people come in that have mental health issues and challenges. I think that has increased since covid as well. Again, we get a lot of people coming through agencies such as SAMH or we are aware of people that have anxiety and are not really comfortable answering the phone when we phone them or the door when we deliver, we leave it at their door as they do not want to come to the door. Obviously, if you are in that position it is quite hard to think about work and employment, and again it limits your opportunities, you are very reliant on the benefits system which is not very supportive.

- I was going to ask, do you feel there is enough being done through the benefits system or any other government policies to try and help people who are facing poverty or would you say there is a lot more room for stuff to be done?

- I think you have the likes of the Westminster government where pretty much everything they do pushes people into poverty. Then, you have the Scottish government that is trying to address that by bringing in Scottish specific benefits, such as the child payments. The benefit is not high enough, so, I am not sure if you have looked at the likes of poverty alliance. They have a campaign about the essentials guarantee. It is about making sure that benefits are enough to cover your basic costs- your food, fuel, rent and they are recommending that it goes from about £90 to £120 a month which is quite a significant increase. They are also looking at things like the minimum income guarantee, just to make sure that everybody has a particular standard of income, that is the type of campaigns that we back and promote and we sign letters and things that go to parliament. The issue is that difference between the Scottish government and Westminster and what they are looking for.

- Through the more sociological side of my research I have come across a lot of perceptions that believe people are just taking advantage of services such as food banks. Would you say this is the case or is it just a myth being pushed through certain angles of the media?

- I think it is a small minority that may take advantage. We are aware of that and we have changed our working system to try and minimise it. If you actually look at what you get in a food bank parcel it is not really what you would choose to shop for. It is also not the healthiest of food, a lot of it is stuff that if you might not be bothered cooking one night you may decide to have but this is what people are having to eat everyday and what we are seeing is there are a lot more people needing ongoing support. So, they are getting that quality of food for quite a long period of time which was never the intention when food banks first started out and they drew up the list of the items that we do give out to people.

- Yes, so would you say most of the people that you help through the food bank you would see again, not just one offs?

- No, it is mostly repeated. Again, that has increased since the cost of living crisis and to be honest there are people that we have supported for years and then there are a lot of people that it takes maybe three months for them if they are working with our money advice agency for there to be a difference in their circumstances. If they are going for the adult disability payment for example, that may take 6 months before their payment actually comes through and their benefit changes have come through. So, during that period of time they may need that food bank support. There is a definite increase in that number needing longer term support.

- Some sociological perspectives may argue that being in a situation where you need help from the likes of a food bank would push someone to work or try harder. Would you say that is the case or not at all?

- One of the things that the government keeps talking about is "get another job" or "work more hours" but you don't always have that. Again, we are in an area where there are not many employment opportunities so the idea of working harder is not really there. To me, there is also a moral aspect to that you have got to have a work life balance and it is a bit unfair that you are maybe expected to work 50 hours a week just to survive.

- Would you say a lot of people in poverty, seeking your help are facing unfair media representation for their circumstances?

- I think in general, what we have found locally maybe 7 years ago was the attitude that "there is no poverty in Moray" and that has definitely changed. Covid, with people getting furloughed or having a decrease in their income and cost of living crisis has made people a little more appreciative of their own circumstances. We can also see how easy it is to slip into that level. We talk about the cost of living crisis but, people have been struggling for 20 odd years that benefits aren't enough. I think now, it is touching people that have not been affected before. In a way, it has been a bit of a leveller and it has helped change attitudes a bit more. There is also the fact that food banks have become accepted now, which is wrong, we should still be shocked that people have to use them. It is like now you have food banks, baby banks, warm hubs and everyone sees that type of support as being the answer but what we actually need to do is address that underlying issue and increase people's income and standard of living.

- Well, I think that is basically all of my questions thank you very much and thank you for your time.

- No problem, if there is anything else just get back to me. Good luck with your dissertation. I look forward to seeing it.

☺ ↩ Reply ↶ Reply all ↷ Forward 📧 ...
Wed 15/11/2023 12:41


To:

Dear Sir/Madam

Hello, I am [redacted] and I am currently in s6 at [redacted]. Through my Advanced Higher Modern Studies course I am completing a dissertation and my chosen topic is looking into different reasons for an individual being in poverty. One of the sections is looking at circumstances out of an individual's control that may lead to poverty. This is why I am contacting you. I am wondering if I would be able to set up an interview or conversation with you in order to gain some understanding of the work you are doing to help people and the circumstances that lead people to seek your help. Ideally this would take place online. If this is possible please would you be able to respond and we can arrange a time to speak. Thank you for your time and I look forward to learning more about what you do.

☺ ↩ Reply ↶ Reply all ↷ Forward 📧 ...
Wed 15/11/2023 13:31

To:



Hi

I would be happy to speak with you, I'm generally free in the afternoons if you want to send a few dates and times.

I've attached a presentation that I have used when doing talks to some organisations, most of it will be a bit meaningless without the narrative but the section on reasons for people needing support may be of some interest.

Thanks

Regards

To:

Moray Food Plus is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) Charity Number SC042997

For more information visit www.morayfoodplus.org.uk or to donate please visit www.morayfoodplus.org.uk/#donate

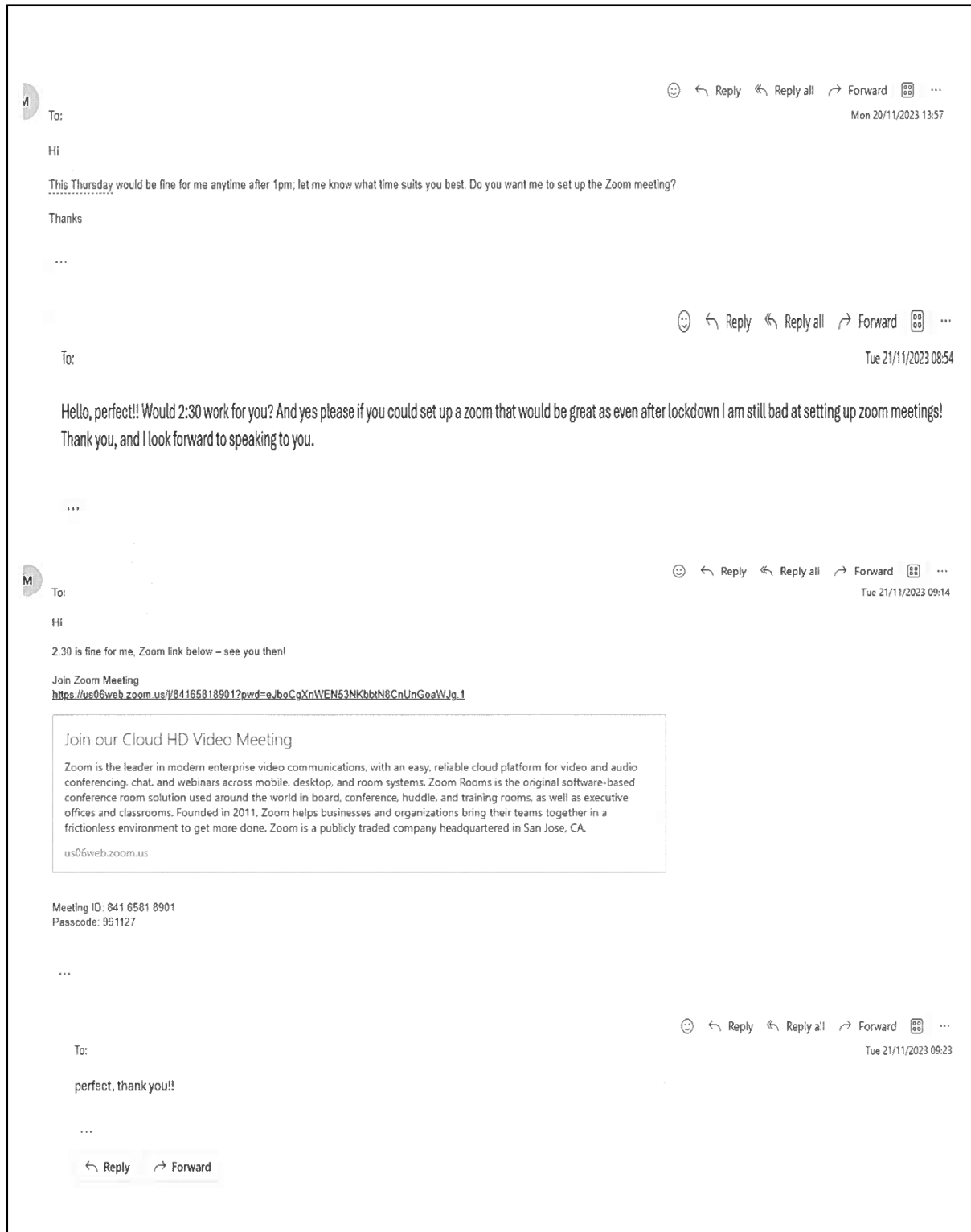
...

☺ ↩ Reply ↶ Reply all ↷ Forward 📧 ...
Mon 20/11/2023 13:01

To:

Hello, thank you for getting back to me! How would a Thursday afternoon work for you? Either this week on the 23rd or next week on the 30th? Would we be able to speak on zoom as it saves anyone having to travel! Thank you.

...



To: ☺ ↩ Reply ↶ Reply all ➦ Forward 📧 ⋮
Mon 20/11/2023 13:57

Hi

This Thursday would be fine for me anytime after 1pm; let me know what time suits you best. Do you want me to set up the Zoom meeting?

Thanks

...

To: ☺ ↩ Reply ↶ Reply all ➦ Forward 📧 ⋮
Tue 21/11/2023 08:54

Hello, perfect!! Would 2:30 work for you? And yes please if you could set up a zoom that would be great as even after lockdown I am still bad at setting up zoom meetings!
Thank you, and I look forward to speaking to you.

...

To: ☺ ↩ Reply ↶ Reply all ➦ Forward 📧 ⋮
Tue 21/11/2023 09:14

Hi

2.30 is fine for me, Zoom link below – see you then!

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84165818901?pwd=eJbaCgXnWFN53NKbbiN6CnUnGoaWJg.1>

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us06web.zoom.us

Meeting ID: 841 6581 8901
Passcode: 991127

...

To: ☺ ↩ Reply ↶ Reply all ➦ Forward 📧 ⋮
Tue 21/11/2023 09:23

perfect, thank you!!

...

↩ Reply ➦ Forward

To: 😊 Reply Reply all Forward ... Thu 29/02/2024 15:18

Hello! This is [redacted], we did an interview for my advanced higher modern studies dissertation a couple of months ago. I am just getting in touch as I am almost finished writing my dissertation (finally!). Before I finalise everything, I realised I did not ever send over a transcript of our interview, so I have attached it here. If you have any issues with anything said or if I have misunderstood anything please let me know 😊 If not then I will send you my final copy over within the next few weeks, yay!

[redacted] Moray Food Plus Interview.pdf

M To: 😊 Reply Reply all Forward ... Thu 29/02/2024 15:26

Hi

Well done, you will be glad that you are nearly finished! I'm unable to open the PDF, would you be able to send it as an attachment please rather than a secure link?

Thanks

...

To: 😊 Reply Reply all Forward ... Fri 01/03/2024 12:20

 Moray Food Plus Interview.d... 21 KB

Hello, sorry about that I did not even realise! Hopefully this is better.

...

M To: 😊 Reply Reply all Forward ... Fri 01/03/2024 12:35

Hi

Just a wee change:

- Page 2 "on sight" should be "on site" when discussing the larders and also the growing site a bit further down the page
- Page 3 "adjoining income" should be "joint income" (maybe I fluffed my words a bit!)
- Page 3 "loaf or bread" should be "loaf of bread"

If the notes are just for yourself it won't matter but just highlighting it incase you have to submit your evidence too.

Hope it all goes well!

...

Reply Forward

Appendix 3

**Interview with _____, children and young persons support worker, Moray
Women's Aid. Interviewed by _____ on 27th of November 2023 at 12 pm at _____**

Transcribed by _____ and checked by _____.

- First of all I will explain for you why I am speaking to you. So, all of my research is going towards my dissertation for my advanced higher modern studies. The title of my dissertation is "poverty is a consequence of individual choice", but I do not feel that is the case and the whole point of my dissertation is to hopefully disprove that. I have split it into two sections; the first one is all about different sociological viewpoints on poverty and the second is on circumstances outside someone's control that may lead to an increased likelihood of poverty or being in an unstable situation. Which is obviously why I am speaking to you. So as you know I am recording this interview and typing up a transcript of everything said. I will obviously send over a copy of that and if there are any issues you notice I can of course make any changes. If you do not want your name or your charities name in it I can obviously not include that either.

- No that should be fine.

- When I finish my dissertation I will send over a copy for you to look at as well. I am also doing this for everyone I have interviewed. It will be read by my teacher and then the SQA when they mark it.

I have got a list of questions for you, hopefully they are all relevant !! If you do not have an answer for any specific question do not worry. My first question is just what do you guys do at Moray Women's Aid?

- Ok, so we support anybody who has experienced domestic abuse. At the moment we are a gold charter marked LGBTQ+ awarded organisation. What that means is that it does not matter what kind of relationship you are in as long as it is an abusive one. It is still, however, female identifying persons that we support. We do also support children of either gender up to the age of 18. That is my role, I am an under 18s support worker. So we offer emotional support but in the adult service we also offer refuge accommodation if required. We are somewhere to come to.

- I should have mentioned at the beginning that in my research into circumstances I am looking at 4 specific factors which are: gender, rurality, ethnicity and disability. Obviously, while I am speaking to you my main focus is gender.

- Yes, it is.

- How many people would you say that you help a year?

- Oh gosh, I might have to come back to you on that as we do actually keep statistics on that which I can give to you. I think off of the top of my head it is around 300-600 people

per year. It is massive and in the children's service alone it is around 150, but I will go and double check all of my facts.

- Wow. Would you say that domestic violence is more likely to occur in homes where there may be poverty? Possibly due to the instability and stress that comes with it.

- This is a difficult one for me. Statistically, there is evidence to say that which I have printed out for you. However, it is more of a gendered issue. Just because you are poor does not mean you are going to act in an abusive manner, it has got to be in you to do it.

- Would you say that women may be less likely to step forward about these kinds of experiences due to all of the evidence about people not being believed in terms of abuse?

- Yes. Again, there are statistics to back this up. I am not a stats person, I am a feelings woman. But, there is a lot of statistical evidence that people will face a number of incidences of abuse before they report them. So, it is not unusual to go on for some time, years even. We have had women who have experienced 30 odd years of abuse before even feeling able to leave.

- When people come to you do they usually have to leave a lot of stuff behind and come with little?

- We try to do a planned leave. It depends on circumstances and sometimes people do arrive with only the clothes on their backs. That I think is the media stereotype but it is not entirely true. What we try to do is work with people who are leaving to get the essentials. Essential documents are the main thing: passports, proof of ID, that kind of thing, birth certificates. Usually they will have some of their possessions. People moving into refuge will in theory lose 99% of their possessions.

- What support do you guys offer people to ensure that once they come out they have still got support and are not just left with nothing and dropped into poverty?

- So, we can support them to make sure they get all of the right benefits that they are entitled to. There is a lot of practical support given to people when they come into refuge. The refuge itself is fully furnished. We have also got dispersed properties which are properties in the community. A lot of people are in situations where they move straight out of the situation and into their own homes. Or, the perpetrator is removed from the home, in which case they usually keep quite a lot of their things. We will support them through community services to move items of furniture. This is a voluntary service we have got, we have built up a lot of networks. There is a thing called community care grant, which people may be entitled to if they have less than £700 in savings. If you have more than £700 in savings it is expected that you can furnish a whole property for that. Including carpets, fridges, cookers. You can see this is almost unrealistic. It also depends on if you are working and your level of income.

- Obviously you deal mostly with women, but would you say that it is mostly women who face domestic violence?

- Statistically, yes. There is very much a gendered inequality to the abuse.

- Would you say a child being involved would make violence more or less likely?

- Again, statistically it is likely to increase during pregnancy. My personal viewpoint is that abusers are generally narcissistic in their approach, and generally they are looking to be the number 1. Their feelings are the only ones that really matter, having that power and control is all that really matters. As soon as children come into the equation, normally in a healthy relationship they take priority and their needs come first. But, actually it may become a competition.

- For children in a violent home, would you say that young girls and boys react in different ways?

- I would say that it is very individual, is what I have found. I expected it to be that way, there are definitely stereotypes that can be passed on and that is where the gender inequality comes in. If you're being taught and seeing one version of a reality- which is women are not worth as much as men then you are more likely to also fall into that belief system. That is for the girls as well, they will see that as how they should be. I have seen it go the other way round as well. It is as individual as people.

- Obviously, you deal with people while they face violence. But after the individual left the home would you say they face barriers to being in a stable situation?

- Yes. This is usually very true. You have got to rebuild as a person. Unfortunately, some people because they do not value themselves, or cannot stand up for themselves will fall into very similar situations. It is not unusual for someone to have an abusive relationship, but the next one they go into looks like it will be brilliant but is not. We can see repeat patterns. There is a misconception that people are looking for these dominant characters but that is untrue. If you do not know your self-worth and if you cannot say no I do not want that then you can fall back into the same relationships.

- Have you dealt with any situations of violence in the workplace?

- Yes, we have certainly had people have put so many barriers in place that women have had to leave their jobs. Having someone turn up at their workplace who behaves in an abusive manner makes it hard to go back. Firstly because of the embarrassment. If you imagine someone coming and having a go at you in front of all of your colleagues, how do you handle that? I think employers are starting to recognise things a bit better and putting things in place to support women, but sometimes people will lose their jobs through no fault of their own.

- Would you say this is common?

- It is not overly common, but it does happen.

- Obviously in Moray, we are not a very diverse society. But would you say women of ethnic minorities would be more likely to experience unstable situations such as abuse or poverty?

- Like you say, in Moray it is hard to say. From my own observations, from the groups that we work with, the more entrenched a belief system is, the more women are not seen as as important or independent as men, which makes it easier for someone to abuse. They can then use cultural references to keep that person controlled. I think we have to be careful with culture. So that A, we do not allow it to be an excuse for abusive behaviour or B, say "that is normal in your culture". It can make it difficult if you have no access to public funds. We have supported women who will not get access to any public funds. They may not be entitled to benefits. Having no rights to anything in the benefits system makes it very difficult to leave a relationship. Quite often immigration is part of that status as well.

- Obviously Moray has a lot of rurality, would you say domestic violence is more likely to occur in a rural area?

- I think rurality can be used. I have seen people move from very busy parts of town where things may be overheard. If you are in a block of flats in a built up area people will notice if there is a lot of shouting, sounds of a violent assault or if someone is looking down trodden. If you can move them out into the middle of nowhere and you are on a farm up here, who is seeing it? Nobody. It is very easy to hide, I have definitely worked on that in a few cases where people have been moved from bigger cities with the hope "we will live in a lovely countryside location" but then you cannot get a bus anywhere. You don't have a car, you can't get a bus, you cannot go anywhere. You become very isolated very easily.

- If a situation is occurring in a very rural household would you say that then makes it harder to escape from?

- Yes it can definitely be. You can't just sneak out, you can't just say I am going to phone womens aid, get an appointment with them, go there and have half an hour with them and then be back in time before it is noticed I am gone. You are suddenly making that a two hour journey. I think it would make a substantial difference.

- Do you think someone with a disability may be more likely to end up in a situation of domestic violence?

- Again, if we look at the statistics I am sure there are stats out there. But I am sure it would make things more difficult to escape from. You already have a lot of control if you are someone's main carer, if they can't go out to work, if they rely on you for day to day tasks or being taken to and from appointments. It would not be much of a leap to think that if you are abusive and you are looking to control someone; someone with a disability would be a greater target.

- Would you say that having a child in the picture could escalate a situation of violence?

- This is again where I think causing violence is maybe not the right wording as the thing that causes violence is a choice. It can add to stress and people do all sorts of bad

things when they are stressed but the core belief has to be there. That they believe they have the right to act in this way.

- Do you think that having a disability could make somebody less likely to speak out about their situation? Especially if it may be mental health issues etc.

- Yes, because what it can be used against you. For example, a number of people have said that they believed that they had mental health issues because they were told they had. They would be pushed, pushed, pushed until they explode- as we all would. Then they go "see" this is because you are off your head. This is why I must control all of the money, it is because your mental health is bad and you cannot look after it. Eventually, you come to believe that and of course it has affected your mental health. It almost becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

- Have you seen the effects that violence can have on a person's mental health?

- Yes.

- What do these impacts look like?

- It is to do with your self-esteem. Your confidence, your ability to trust your own judgement, there is the term "gaslighting". If you cannot believe what you know is true that impacts your ability to understand what is real what is not. What do I think? What do I believe? If you have not been allowed opinions, where do you go from there? It can also lead to PTSD and there are layers upon layers of problems. I think even the most well adjusted women, who experience domestic abuse, it will have a negative impact on them whether it is short term or long term.

- Have you seen the impact on other members of the family such as children as well?

- Yes, I am a children worker so my job is within that remit. Loving your parents is an inbuilt need to survive, therefore we trust our parents to provide for us. If one of them is abusive the impact is huge.

- We are running out of time! I only really have one more question which is are there any other sources that you can recommend to me to further my research?

- I have a little bundle of things here for you. Certainly I would say look at the Women's Aid website. Unfortunately, the Moray website is in the process of being redone. What I can do is I can send you bits and pieces. I will send you the stats and things and if you want to send me the questions I can make them very specific to that. Anything at all we can do to help and help you understand. It is not only leaving an abusive relationship that can lead to poverty. People can be in a very good home and because of the financial abuse may still be experiencing extreme poverty on an individual basis. We have had people in houses we would probably all aspire to live in, who have had nothing to eat because they cannot afford it. They are limited to how much they can buy and spend, that may be for the children as well. They may be a member of all of the polo clubs in town and live this affluent lifestyle on the outside; but be incredibly poor. It is a complicated matter!

- Well, thank you very much for your time and for speaking to me.

- I am always happy to, good luck with your dissertation.

☺ Reply Reply all Forward

To:

Wed 15/11/2023 12:

Dear Sir/Madam

Hello, I am [redacted] and I am currently in s6 at [redacted]. Through my Advanced Higher Modern Studies course I am completing a dissertation and my chosen topic is looking into different reasons for an individual being in poverty. One of the sections is looking at circumstances out of an individual's control that may lead to poverty. This is why I am contacting you. I am wondering if I would be able to set up an interview or conversation with you in order to gain some understanding of the work you are doing to help people and the circumstances that lead people to seek your help. Ideally this would take place online. If this is possible please would you be able to respond and we can arrange a time to speak. Thank you for your time and I look forward to learning more about what you do.

EA

To:

☺ Reply Reply all Forward

Wed 15/11/2023 15:

Hello

Thank you for contacting us.

I would be more than happy to have a conversation with you and see how we can support you with your dissertation.

I can meet you face to face in school, if this would work for you, or we can set up an online meeting.

If you could suggest some dates and times, I will see what I can do.

Regards,

Children & Young Person's Support Worker
Working days are Monday to Wednesday 9am to 5pm
Children & young person team: 01343 548550
Main Office: 01343 548565
Helpline: 01343 548549

Moray Women's Aid
"Marleon House"
57A Marleon Field
Silvercrest
ELGIN
IV30 4GB

Web page: www.mwaelgin.co.uk



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www.mwaelgin.co.uk

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To: Mon 20/11/2023 12:55

Hello, thank you for getting back to me! I am happy to speak on zoom if that makes things easier for you not having to travel up to my school. Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday mornings are always quite free for me. Would one of those mornings next week work for you? Thanks.

...

 EA 😊 ↩ Reply ↶ Reply all ↷ Forward 📧 ...

To: Mon 20/11/2023 13:

Hello

I'm more than happy to come up to the school but if it's better for you we can arrange a zoom meeting.

I am free -

Monday 27th - 11.30am - 4.45pm
Tuesday 28th - 11 am - 1.15pm or 3.45pm - 4.45pm
Wednesday 29th - 4pm - 4.45pm


Let me know if any of those days or times work for you, if not we would be looking into week of the 4th of December.

Regards,

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Complementary therapy centre in Lisburn Northern Ireland. Improving women's Health & Fertility. Reflexology | Massage | Reiki | Aromatherapy

😊 ↩ Reply ↶ Reply all ↷ Forward 📧 ...

To: Tue 21/11/2023 08:58

Hello, would you manage 12pm next Monday the 27th be good for you? I am happy to do in person or online, whatever works for you.
Thank you!

...

 To: 😊 ↩ Reply ↶ Reply all → Forward 📧 ...
Wed 22/11/2023 10:22

Hi,

I have an appointment in 12.20 that day anyway so could see you before it – if 20 minutes will be long enough?


If you need a longer, I can try and be up there a little earlier.

...

To: 😊 ↩ Reply ↶ Reply all → Forward 📧 ...
Wed 22/11/2023 11:35

Hello, 20 minutes should be enough so that should work perfectly, thank you! Look forward to speaking to you.

...

 To: 😊 ↩ Reply ↶ Reply all → Forward 📧 ...
Wed 22/11/2023 13:29

I will meet you at reception, are you able to find us somewhere to chat in the school?

...

To: 😊 ↩ Reply ↶ Reply all → Forward 📧 ...
Wed 22/11/2023 15:00

Perfect, and yes I will find us somewhere! Thank you again for taking time to come and speak to me.

...

 To: 😊 ↩ Reply ↶ Reply all → Forward 📧 ...
Mon 27/11/2023 16:47

Hi

It was good to meet you today.

If you send me the questions you went through, I can give you more specific answers around stats etc.

I checked our statistics from the financial year 2022 – 2023 which shows the following information (which I thought may be helpful to you).

Number of Women Supported by Moray Women's Aid – 601
Number of Children and Young People Supported – 124

Number of Women supported in our Refuge Accommodation – 28
Number of Children and Young People living in Refuge - 31

Good luck with completing your dissertation.

...

😊 ↩ Reply ↶ Reply all → Forward 📎 ...
Thu 30/11/2023 14:08

To:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1VYYn5EQLn63FuWuKQZk7I9TYX3lGoXTh9AU2iVvQlU/edit?usp=sharing>

Hello, thank you again for taking the time to speak to me! I have attached my list of questions that I had, so if you had anything to add that would be great, thanks!

...

↩ Reply → Forward

😊 ↩ Reply ↶ Reply all → Forward 📎 ...
Thu 29/02/2024 15:17

To:

Hello! This is [redacted] we did an interview for my advanced higher modern studies dissertation a couple of months ago. I am just getting in touch as I am almost finished writing my dissertation (finally!). Before I finalise everything, I realised I did not ever send over a transcript of our interview, so I have attached it here. If you have any issues with anything said or if I have misunderstood anything please let me know 😊 If not then I will send you my final copy over within the next few weeks, yay!

[📎 Moray Women's Aid Interview.pdf](#)

↩ Reply → Forward

😊 ↩ Reply ↶ Reply all → Forward 📎 ...
Wed 13/03/2024 13:27

EA To:

Hi

Sorry it has taken me so long to get back to you. I hope all is going well with your studies.

Thank you for sending over the transcript of our chat. Having read it over I see that I misheard on of the questions. When asked about ' had I dealt with any situations of violence in the workplace' I had thought you meant had people experiencing domestic abuse had those experiences, but I see now that I responded around that rather than my person experiences of violence in the workplace. If you need any clarity on that from a personal perspective just let me know. Also I can't recall if I ever sent you the stat's I mentioned, if not let me know and I can get them for you (if you still need them).

Regards,

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Appendix 4

Resource sheet given by Moray Women's Aid

4

<https://cpag.org.uk/news-blogs/news-listings/domestic-abuse-economic-issue-%E2%80%93-its-victims-and-society>

1. DOMESTIC ABUSE IS AN ECONOMIC ISSUE – FOR ITS VICTIMS AND FOR SOCIETY

DOMESTIC ABUSE IS AN ECONOMIC ISSUE – FOR ITS VICTIMS AND FOR SOCIETY

Violence against women is first and foremost a violation of women's human rights. During these 16 days of activism against VAWG (violence against women and girls), we highlight how economic inequality is facilitating violence perpetrated by men against women. We need to make our economy work for women so women can be safer, and a properly functioning social security system is integral to this.

Often, economic equality and safety from violence against women and girls are seen as separate issues.

However, gender norms, inadequate public services, the gender pay gap and downright discrimination all contribute to women's disadvantaged position in the economy. Women do more unpaid work around the house and by taking care of children and frail adults. This means they earn less, own less and are more likely to be poor.

Women are therefore more likely to be financially dependent on someone else or on the state. The erosion of the state's welfare safety net and increasingly stringent access rules have a disproportionate impact on women. Women are placed in a precarious economic position that has a knock-on effect on their safety.

Poverty is associated with domestic abuse as both a cause and a consequence. It prolongs women's exposure to abuse by reducing their ability to leave and it makes women poorer on leaving the relationship.

Poorer households show higher rates of domestic abuse. Women in households with low incomes are 3.5 times more likely to experience domestic violence than women in slightly better-off households. The links are complex but one thing is certain: poverty exacerbates the abuse because it increases or prolongs women's exposure to it as it reduces their capacity to leave.

One answer to the old question: 'Why doesn't she just leave?' becomes evident when we look at the statistics: for the vast majority of women, economic abuse happens alongside other forms of domestic abuse. This may include coercive control of finances (97% of domestic abuse victims), sabotage - such as the abuser showing up at the woman's workplace or making her late to undermine her job - (89%), and financial exploitation (87%). There are many reasons why women don't leave violent relationships, and fear for their safety and their children's is one of the biggest. But financial insecurity also looms large in women's decision-making.

But when a woman does leave, her economic situation is still dire and often gets worse. She may need to leave the area and therefore lose her job. If she was on

working-age benefits or housing benefit, she will need to make a new claim and will be transferred to universal credit, which takes five weeks to process before she receives payment. How can she support herself and her children in the meantime?

These issues are compounded for certain groups of women. Disabled women have even fewer resources due to their lower rates of employment and wider gender pay gaps compared to disabled and non-disabled men. Cuts to benefits since 2010 and stringent eligibility criteria, including sanctions, have made it harder for disabled women (and men) to have a liveable income. Disabled women will face additional barriers to leave due to inaccessible services, transport and available adapted homes, but also because their abusive partner is often their carer.

Many migrant women have what's called 'no recourse to public funds'. This means they cannot use the social security, housing or women's refuge services available to other women. Women with no recourse to public funds by virtue of their migration status are a group that is economically very vulnerable to domestic abuse. Their options on leaving are even worse than for other women, as they can't access benefits and only a reduced number of refuges and shelters can accommodate them.

The impact of domestic abuse on women's – and children's – lives is devastating and should be addressed on that basis alone, on the violation of women's human rights that it is. By the government's own admission, domestic violence also has an alarming negative impact on society as whole: domestic violence costs England and Wales £66bn every year through things like lost productivity, health and criminal justice costs, and harm to victims.

It is time the government recognised the importance of ensuring women's economic equality and independence when designing social security policy. There are a few key changes that could be made that would make a real difference to women's lives and contribute to ensuring their safety:

- Affordable childcare needs to be introduced alongside flexible working as the norm in most workplaces to ensure that women and men can share care more equally and fairly, and that women can continue to earn an independent income when they become mothers.
- Women with no recourse to public funds need to be able to access support and refuges too, so there need to be mechanisms in place that swiftly allow women with no recourse facing violence to have access to benefits, support and housing.

And finally, we need a safety net that truly saves people from destitution and allows survivors to rebuild their lives. Individual entitlements are crucial for ensuring financial autonomy and women's safety.

Social security needs to work for all groups of women, not against them.

Read more in our reports:

[A Home of Her Own: Women and Housing](#)
[Benefits or barriers: Making social security work for survivors of violence and abuse across the UK's four nations](#)

Appendix 5

Interview with _____ **Deputy head teacher/ principal teacher at**
_____ Interviewed by _____ **at** _____ **on 24th of**
November 2023 at 10am.
Transcribed by _____ **and checked by** _____

- Before we start I have a statement to read to you to make sure you know why I am going this and what this interview is for. So, all of the information that I am gathering is going towards my advanced higher modern studies dissertation. As I said before, the title of my dissertation is "poverty is a consequence of individual choice". But I do not believe that to be true so the whole point of my research is to disprove that statement. It is split into two essays; the first being on sociological perspectives on the issue of poverty and the second is about the circumstances out of a person's control that may lead them to be in poverty. This is why I am speaking to you. I am recording this and will type up a transcript of all that is said. Anything said that you do not want to be in, just let me know and I can take it out, I also do not have to include your name if you do not want. My dissertation will only be read by Ms Childs and the SQA when it is marked. Before I send it away I will show you and the other people I have interviewed a copy to ensure you are happy with everything said and if not I can change it.

- Ok that is fine.

- Perfect, I sent you most of my questions so you should have a pretty good idea of what I am going to say.

So, first of all what is your role of dealing with the public equity fund and what exactly is that?

- Sure, so my name is Marc McWhirter and I am a deputy head teacher here at Speyside High School. I job share with Mrs Duffy and she and I are both responsible for the Pupil Equity Fund and supporting you people at SHS who are associated with the Pupil Equity Fund. So, what that means is we have a certain budget that has been allocated by the Scottish Government in order to support what we now refer to as "tackling the poverty related attainment gap" but it used to be referred to as "closing the poverty related attainment gap". So, we get a certain amount of money per pupil to put in interventions that will support these young people in closing that attainment gap for anyone who receives free school meals.

- Ok, would you say that there are a lot of pupils at SHS in poverty?

- Yes, just under about 10% of our school role I believe. Although, we have noted an increased amount of young people who receive free school meals this academic year. I think there are a lot of people who we know about through other means and not just the free school meals marker. Through, perhaps, what their guidance teacher knows about the family situation and things like that. I believe there are a number who we probably do not know about as well.

- Would you say that a lot of families in the school community who are in poverty are impacted by the factors I am focusing on in my dissertation which are: rurality, gender, ethnicity, disability and rurality.

- There are 6 different family groups who the Scottish government have identified as potentially being at risk of having an attainment gap related to poverty and these are a few. Particularly disability, having a disability in the family or having a caring role especially as a young carer is one of the ones that I often think is hidden at times. Ethnicity, yes. I think there is an element of that. You will know yourself that we are not the most diverse school in the country so I would say that is probably less of a marker here at SHS than maybe other schools in the central belt ect, we do not face that as much. Rurality thought, yes absolutely. You have probably come across the Scottish Index on Multiple Deprivation, which categorises the deprivation levels of people in an area based on the postcode they live in and it is one of the big markers in schools. Unfortunately, it doesn't really work in our school because of its rural location. So you can have a huge variety in the area of the conditions and the family situations that young people are living in even though that are in the same SIMD area. We can have people who live in one of the highest quintiles which is SIMD 9 but actually they could be experiencing poverty and be in receipt of free school meals. So yes, rurality is a huge problem in our area particularly with access to local services in the area. This rural poverty is very quite pervasive for our school group and if you think about transport links and job opportunities, young people do not have the same opportunities that even their peers in Elgin are enjoying. Moray is quite interesting in terms of the SIMD as well, I think Elgin is the only area which has pupils at school in SIMD 1 which is the lowest possible bracket. So, yes there are a lot of young people that are impacted by those markers that you are talking about but, I think the most pervasive one is probably the rurality aspect for us. But, again just general poverty exists as well that is not a result of any of those categories.

- Other than the Pupil Equity Fund, which you are obviously involved in. Are there any other things being done through the education system to ensure that people facing these circumstances are being supported?

- Yes, so for example, we have a whole host of IT equipment that we can give out to young people. This funding came from the Scottish government and it came about during covid where we could request a laptop for young people who did not have access to laptops to be able to do their school work at home. That is an example of some of the interventions in place in the wider system. There are a whole host of benefits that people can access. Young people are entitled to money for attending school. I think a lot of the interventions that are available though are more targeted at families rather than the young person themselves.

- Do you think this action is enough or do you think there is room for more to be taken?

- No. These are not enough and in fact I would say that the Pupil Equity fund is not having the impact that it needs to. One of the big issues that we currently have as I told you is that the number of our young people who are in receipt of the Pupil Equity Fund has dramatically increased and that is due to a number of factors. Change in family demographics, the cost of living crisis and other factors. But our funding has not increased and it is fixed until the end of the academic year in 2025/26, that is when our PEF funding

will be re-evaluated. It is based on the number of PEF pupils we had a year ago. So, we now have more pupils to support with the same amount of money. This means we have to look for other sources of funding to support the interventions we have and sustain the ones we have got already.

- Through the sociological side of my research I have come across a lot of perspectives that believe it is a person's own fault that they are in poverty. Do you think a lot of the families you deal with are in poverty due to their own choice?

- I do not think anyone chooses to be in poverty. I think there are various different reasons why someone may end up in that situation but i don't think anyone would want to by choice. I think a lot of families that are in the situation that they are in for a whole host of reasons, i do not think a family would ever choose to be in it.

- I have also come across a lot of myths that people would take advantage of welfare available. Do you think that anybody you deal with is taking advantage of PEF?

- Absolutely not. I think there is a lot of stuff that you see in the media which often criticises people for using the benefits system and I do not agree with that at all. I suppose there are people who abuse benefits but my understanding is that they are in the poverty minority of this. I would say most people are honest and do not take advantage of systems.

- I will now go a little more in depth to the specific factors that I am looking into. Would you say that children with lone parents may be more likely to face poverty?

- Yes, single parent families are more likely to face poverty, they are one of the 6 family groups identified by the government for being at risk of having the poverty related attainment gap.

- Would you say this is more lone mothers or lone fathers?

- I think it is statistically more likely to be lone mothers that have single parent family units. Therefore, I think it is more likely to be lone mothers just based on that. Myself, I grew up in a single parent household in Paisley in what would now be classified as SIMD 1. Around myself growing up I say lots of lone mothers, I did not see a lot of lone fathers. Not to say they do not exist, but statistically I think that it is skewed towards lone mothers.

- Is there any specific support available to lone parents to help keep their children in a stable situation?

- I would not say I am very well informed in the child benefit system I am afraid. So, I probably could not answer that question.

- No problem, that is ok. From your experience in the school would you say that girls and boys have different experiences or reactions to situations of poverty?

- I think in general terms I usually find that girls are more likely to talk openly about things than boys. Especially feelings! So, probably. But, I would not say that I have had any direct investigations into that.

- About ethnicity, obviously in Moray and especially there is not a wide range of diversity. Would you say that you have noticed a pattern of families of ethnic backgrounds being more likely to face poverty?

- Yes. I suppose one in particular in the last academic year may be Ukrainian refugees coming to the country who may need a lot of support and they were a big focus. But yes, in general families who are new to the country do need support.

- Why would this maybe be the case, is it possibly due to discrimination and barriers being in place?

- I think there are definitely barriers in place for young people who are immigrating to the country for society as a whole. I think it is often more difficult for them to find work. I think that they do not know all of the systems of support that are available to them and what they are entitled to. Often, they are not entitled to very much and I think there are different rules and regulations depending on which route that people come into the country as well, this makes things difficult. I personally believe that everyone has a universal right to access the different systems and it should not be based on passports and things like that. I do think that there are societal barriers in place to people who are immigrants in the country.

- Would you say that families where a member has a disability or additional support needs would be more likely to face poverty?

- Yes, because often at times some families who have severe disabilities within the unit, one of the parents may not be able to work as they have additional caring responsibilities. Or the parent may have a disability and be unable to work, therefore, immediately they are already on a single income which is very difficult in this day and age where there is a cost of living crisis and families are really relying on that dual income to make ends meet. So yes, I think that is a huge concern. I think it is only something that is recently coming into the Scottish government's mind about what markers could influence poverty related attainment gaps.

- Is there any support in place to help people with a child/ parents with a disability.

- Yes, at SHS we are aware of young people who have caring responsibilities for a family member and we include this in our PEF funding.

- If a family member or child with a disability are receiving support do they continue to receive support after they leave school?

- I believe there are some elements of support from adult services but they do not receive support from the school system. I would not really know what support from adult services really looks like. Guidance teachers and maybe SLF maybe know a little more about the shape of that and what post school transitions look like for those young people.

- But there is a post school transition?

- What the shape of that transition may look like, I am not sure. But I do know that colleagues have dealt with adult services for people moving on. Particularly for people with disabilities it depends on the young person in the situation. I am not sure if there is a full formal process set out in policy. It varies from student to student.

- Would you say a lot of council housing in our area is in very rural locations?

- No. There is a shortage of council housing available in Moray. People on the list usually wait a long time, years I believe. I believe the Moray council housing is of good quality but I also believe there needs to be more built.

- Do you think that the isolation of living rurally could impact the access to opportunities such as jobs?

- Absolutely, I think the huge factor here is that if you live in this general area your ability to get a job relies on the ability to drive and have a car. If you do not have a job, is that possible? I would say not on universal credit.

- Do you think the lack of services in rural areas impacts the situation in which people live?

- Yes. I think public transport is a huge factor there and the buses to our largest local towns with all of the shops are very few and far between. I think there is a council bus service that you can phone for, but again I think this is quite slow. This limits access to local services.

- Do you think living rurally may mask the issues people are facing causing them to go unnoticed?

- I think rural poverty is not as well known as financial poverty and I think it is not accounted for in the systems that are related to poverty, no.


- Ok, well that is basically all of my questions. I just have one more. I think you have basically touched on the answer. But, is the number of children in poverty at SHS increasing in more recent years?

- Yes absolutely. The cost of living crisis is driving poverty up nationally and Speyside is no exception to that and more young people are affected by poverty than when I entered the profession all those years ago.

- Thank you very much for speaking to me and for giving up your time to help answer my questions. I will get a draft of my dissertation to you as soon as I have a finalised draft.

☺ ↩ Reply ↶ Reply all ↷ Forward 📧 ·
Wed 22/11/2023 11:...

To:

 [questions.shs.docx](#)

Hello, here are the questions I have written up for our interview on Friday. Thank you for agreeing to speak to me!


...

↩ Reply ↷ Forward

☺ ↩ Reply ↶ Reply all ↷ Forward 📧 ...
Tue 21/11/2023 11:55

To:

<https://www.povertyalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/The-Poverty-related-Attainment-Gap-A-Review-of-the-Evidence-2.pdf>

01340 871 522


The contents of this email and any attachments ('this email') are confidential and intended solely for the addressee.
Know anyone experiencing Domestic Abuse?
Helpline – 0800 027 1234 or [safer.scot](#)
Police – 999 or 101