



McKinney, S. J., Hall, S. and Lowden, K. (2020) Poverty and education in Scotland. In: Thompson, I. and Ivinson, G. (eds.) Poverty in Education Across the UK: A Comparative Analysis of Policy and Place. Policy Press: Bristol, pp. 65-88. ISBN 9781447327998.

This is the Author Accepted Manuscript.

There may be differences between this version and the published version. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite from it.

<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/222874/>

Deposited on: 07 September 2022

Enlighten – Research publications by members of the University of Glasgow  
<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk>

# **Poverty and Education in Scotland**

**By Stephen J. McKinney, Stuart Hall and Kevin Lowden**

## **Introduction**

The discussion and critical examination of poverty, child poverty and the impact of child poverty on school education in Scotland has intensified in recent years. This has been provoked by the increase in the level of poverty and a greater awareness of the effects of poverty and deprivation. The levels of child poverty have remained more stable but are still disturbingly high. Arguably, a more informed and nuanced understanding of the complexity of these issues has begun to emerge and influence public consciousness. There is now greater cognizance that children are dependents and are affected by the financial resource issues faced by their parents or carers. These challenges can include long term unemployment or the cycle of ‘low pay, no pay’ (Thompson, 2015). There has been a rise in the level of working poverty in Scotland as the percentage of the working age population in relative poverty has risen from 48% in 1996-99 to 59% in 2014-17 (Scottish Government, 2019a). These challenges all lead to temporary or longer-term financial insecurity that impact on the lives of children and their readiness to participate in all social and academic aspects of school life.

There has also been an increased focus on research and the collation of information on child poverty and the impact of child poverty on school education. There are numerous ways to measure child poverty and deprivation and there is a substantial body of evidence on attainment and achievement (these will be discussed later in the chapter). There is also evidence that gender and disability are important factors that can be barriers to work and this has an effect on the household income (Congreve and McCormick, 2018). Around 40% of the children living in poverty are in a family with a disabled member, usually an adult. For half of these children, there is no adult working in the household. The children themselves may be the primary or sole carer for a disabled adult: there are approximately 44,000 young carers (young people under 18) in Scotland who care for a friend or a member of the family because of illness, disability, mental health or addiction (Scottish Government, 2018a). There are other issues about child poverty that have been highlighted recently. New arrival or migrant families, for example, can face serious difficulties and there is a growing body of research focused on the poverty of new arrival children, and the obstacles related to their engagement in school education and Scottish society (Sime et al., 2014; McKinney et. al., 2016; Forbes and Sime, 2016).

The aim of this chapter is to critically examine child poverty and the impact of child poverty on school education in contemporary Scotland and the reactions and responses to the impact of child poverty on school education by official bodies and groups: the Scottish Government, Poverty Action Groups, Educationalists, academics and Educational Trade unions. The chapter is divided into eight parts: the introduction; a concise overview of the Scottish education system; poverty in Scotland; Child poverty in Scotland; The impact of child poverty on school education; the responses to the impact of poverty on school education; the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act, 2017 and Concluding Remarks.

## Scotland and Education

Scottish devolution and the reintroduction of the Scottish Parliament in 1999 brought new devolved powers to Scotland although this did not include the creation and management of a separate Scottish education system. (Gillies, 2018). This is because the Scottish education system was already independent and distinct in the United Kingdom and this has been zealously guarded since 1707 (Anderson, 2018). The contemporary education system in Scotland is understood to be distinct because of the historical emphasis on breadth of learning and the roles of the General Teaching Council Scotland, Education Scotland and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (McGinley, 2018). All areas of education in Scotland have been under the remit of The Education and Skills Committee of the Scottish Parliament since 2016 (Redford, 2018). This is a wide remit and includes the preschool sector, school sector, further and higher education sectors and lifelong learning. The thirty-two local authorities have the responsibility for the delivery of education to pre-5s and schools (McGinley, 2018). The current Scottish state-funded school estate consists of 2,483 schools: 2012 primary schools, 357 secondary schools and 114 special schools (Scottish Government, 2019b). These schools educate a total of 693,251 pupils. The state-funded schools are classified as non-denominational or denominational: the vast majority of schools are non-denominational. The denominational schools are mostly Roman Catholic, bar a Jewish primary that shares a campus with a Catholic primary school and a very small number of Episcopalian schools. There are 361 Catholic schools: 305 primary schools; 53 secondary schools and 3 additional Support Needs schools.

## Poverty in Scotland

### *Measuring poverty in Scotland*

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) has been described as the official Scottish Government tool for the measurement of deprivation in Scotland and represents a multi-dimensional approach (Scottish Government, 2016a). The SIMD splits Scotland into 6,976 data zones and deprivation is measured using 38 indicators which are grouped into seven ‘domains’ (income, employment, health, education, housing, access and crime) and the figures are aggregated. The 6,976 data zones are ranked from 1 (most deprived) to 6,976 (least deprived). The data is also divided into 10 deciles (each contains 10% of the data zones) and the enumeration begins with 1 as the most deprived data zone to 10 as the least deprived data zone. The SIMD identifies deprivation in an area and this is very helpful as it provides information on the zones with the highest levels of deprivation throughout the country.

The Scottish Government uses other approaches to measuring poverty and deprivation. The report: *The Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland: 2015-18* is illustrative of this as this report draws on the Family Resources Survey and uses the widely recognized measures of relative and absolute poverty and also a new measure of combined low income and child material deprivation. (Scottish Government, 2019c; Gov.UK, 2019a). The indicator that is used most frequently is relative poverty after housing costs. The Scottish Government describes relative poverty as measuring the extent to which the incomes of the poorest households are ‘keeping pace’ with the middle-income households in the UK. The Scottish Government describes absolute

poverty as measuring if the incomes of the poorest households are keeping pace with inflation and is based on the poverty threshold in 2010/2011.

The use of the new combined low income and child material deprivation measure provides a different perspective and provides further information on the implications of poverty for daily life of families and children. It is useful to discuss this in more detail.

### *Combined low income and material deprivation*

The Scottish Government continues to use threshold measurements (to be discussed below) and the SIMD data and has also introduced 'experimental statistics' on combined low income and material deprivation to measure living standards. Material deprivation measures when households are unable to afford basic goods and activities that are perceived to be essential in society. (Scottish Government, 2017a). The Government has used a list of 22 necessities (11 are applied to households and 11 are applied to children). For households this will include money that is available for unexpected but necessary expenses, money for repairs or replacement of essential electrical goods, ability to maintain the fabric of the house and sufficient funds to participate in sports or hobbies. For children this will include an annual holiday, day trips, pocket money and money to save, access to a computer and the internet for homework, access to outdoor space for play and sufficient clothing. A family is deemed to be in material deprivation if they are unable to afford three or more items out of the 22 necessities. Households are considered to be on low income, for the purposes of this measurement, when their total net income is below 70% of the Scottish median after housing costs.

Part of the reason that these statistics are described as experimental is because they were gathered through the Scottish Household Survey between 2014 and 2016 and they use a small sample of children to represent all children. Nevertheless, they are helpful as they indicate that children who belong to families with limited resources are more likely to: live in rented accommodation; live in the most deprived areas; belong to lone parent households; have three or more siblings in the family; live with a disabled adult; live in a household where only one adult or no adult works. The measurement indicates that the Scottish average figure for children who live in families with limited resources is 20%. The Council area of Glasgow City has the highest number of children who live in combined low income and material deprivation at 41%. This is significantly higher than the next highest Council area of South Ayrshire at 29%.

The experimental statistics were updated in 2019 and covered the period 2014-2017 and it is instructive to note that the levels of poverty have increased (Scottish Government, 2019c). The updated statistics indicate that there are now 21% of children living in families with limited resources after housing costs. Glasgow and South Ayrshire remain the areas with the highest number of children living in families with limited resources and the figures have increased for both areas: Glasgow (from 41% to 43%) and South Ayrshire (a considerable increase from 29% to 36%).

### *The levels of Poverty in Scotland*

The latest figures for the levels of poverty in Scotland indicate that the period 2015-2018 witnessed an increase in both relative and absolute poverty after housing costs

(Scottish Government, 2019d). It is estimated that 20% of Scotland's population (1.03 million people) live in relative poverty and 18% (930,000) of the population live in absolute poverty. The figures have also been rising before housing costs are factored in. It is estimated that 24% (240,000) of children were living in relative poverty after housing costs. The figures for absolute child poverty after housing costs remained at 22% (220,000 children). The figures for child poverty before housing costs are 20% for relative poverty and 17% for absolute poverty. The figures for children in combined material deprivation and low income are stable both after and before housing costs. The figure for after housing costs for 2015-2018 is 12% of children (120,000) which is similar to 2014-2017. The figures for before housing costs for 2015-2018 are 11% (110,000) which is one percent higher than the previous period. The figures for the number of children living in households that experience in-work poverty is beginning to stabilise. For the period 2015-2018, 65% of children who are living in relative poverty are in working households after housing costs, compared to 66% in the previous period. The figures for before housing costs have remained the same at 65%.

These are the official statistics that are used by the government and are cited by academics, the press and the media. There are other signs and indicators of the increase in poverty in Scotland. The introduction of the controversial benefit Universal Credit has had a major impact in Scotland as in other parts of the UK. It is important to note that Benefits and Social Security are reserved matters and not devolved to the Scottish Government (Gov.UK, 2019b). Universal Credit has been heavily critiqued as being calculated on the circumstances that pertain on one day in each month and this makes budgeting very difficult and insecure for those on low incomes (Millar and Bennett, 2017). The delay of five to six weeks for the first payment has caused severe hardship (Gov.UK, 2019c). Claimants in Scotland have the option to be paid once or twice a month, but the initial delay in payment still applies to Scotland.

The increase in the use of food banks over the last few years is an indication of the rise in poverty and deprivation. The Trussell Group which supports over 1,200 food banks in the UK reports the provision of just under 1.6 million three-day emergency food supplies between 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2018 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 (The Trussell Trust, 2019). This represents a 18.8% increase from the previous year and an increase of 73% over five years. More than half a million (577,618) of these food supplies went to children. The figures for three-day emergency food supplies for Scotland of 210, 605 in 2018-2019 are the second highest in UK. This figure does not represent the full extent of the use of foodbanks. The Independent Food Aid Network collected data from 84 independent food banks in Scotland that demonstrates that a further 159,849 emergency parcels were given out between April 2018 and March 2019 (IFAN, 2019). Even this additional data may not provide a fully accurate account of the extent of the use of foodbanks in this period of time as the list of the 84 independent foodbanks does not appear to include all of the food distribution centres of Christian Churches, Mosques and synagogues.

## **Child Poverty in Scotland**

### *Measuring child poverty in Scotland*

One of the ongoing debates in Scotland is focused on establishing the most effective measurement(s) of the poverty and deprivation of children. There are a number of

measures that are used: entitlement to free school meals; The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation and the new measure that has recently been adopted, combined low income and material deprivation (which has already been examined). It is important to discuss free school meals and SIMD in some detail. This will be preceded by some comments on threshold measurements.

### *Threshold measurements*

The use of a threshold to measure poverty is a common practice and yet is fraught with complications. The use of a threshold, which is normally means tested according to income, is to create a 'poverty line' and there are serious challenges in adopting this 'line'. A person or a family may be above or below the poverty line, but this does not take into account some of the deeper and longer term effects of poverty on people, families and dependent children. In the case of children, who are experiencing poverty it is helpful to adopt the 'three-dimensional (3D) approach' of Adamson (2012) when using a poverty line to measure child poverty. This means taking account of: (1) the number of children who fall below a national poverty line; (2) how far the children fall below the line and (3) how long the children remain below the line. (McKinney, 2014). We would propose that the 3D approach be expanded to a 4D approach: (4) how far above the line the children are, and yet still experience the effects of poverty.

### *Free School Meals and SIMD*

Perhaps one of the best examples of a threshold measurement is the entitlement to free school meals which is commonly used as a proxy measure for the poverty of children. It has also been used recently as a measure to allocate additional funding for schools in England and Wales (Taylor, 2018). The national criteria for eligibility to free school meals is mainly based on the family being in receipt of benefits (Scottish Government, 2018b). There are limitations to the use of this measurement. As a threshold measurement, there is a cut-off point and we return to our point above about the 4D approach: there can be families and children above the line, who are not entitled to register their children for free school meals, but who are also in poverty. Some families, despite publicity campaigns, do not register their children for free school meals. Nevertheless, it can be a useful measurement (especially when correlated with other measurements) because it is commonly used in different parts of the UK and in countries in other parts of the world. This means that it can be used for comparative studies within and beyond the UK. Further, the data that is collected is readily available, is fairly reliable and refers to individuals (McKinney et al., 2012, 2013).

In recent years the use of this measure in Scotland has become more complex. From 2015, all children regardless of family income have been entitled to free school meals between primary one and primary three in Scotland (mygov.scot, 2019). This means that free school meals as a proxy measure for poverty can only be used for pupils after primary three in Scotland from 2015 onwards. The use of the measure was further complicated in 2018 when Glasgow City Council (GCC) extended this provision of free school meals to all pupils from primary one to primary four in GCC schools with further plans to provide free school meals for all levels of primary schooling by the year 2022 (Glasgow City Council, 2019). We have already mentioned that some families do not register for free school meals and there is also inconsistency across Scotland between the number of children who are entitled to free school meals after primary three (and

primary four for Glasgow) and those who actually take free school meals. This is a continuing cause for concern.

The Scottish Index of multiple Deprivation (SIMD), as has been stated, can help local authorities identify the levels of deprivation in zones throughout Scotland and make decisions on allocation of resources based on this information. It can also provide information about the levels of deprivation in a school catchment area. One of the limitations of SIMD, however, is that it does not identify deprivation for a specific family or for individuals and that includes children. This means that populations who are not deprived, according to the standard measures, live in areas that are classified as deprived and populations who are deprived live in areas that are classified as not being deprived. While the general information provided by SIMD is helpful for schools, it needs to be correlated with other measures that are more focused on the individual.

### **The impact of poverty on school education**

There has been some very useful research conducted in the last ten years that has focused on the effects of child poverty on school education in Scotland. Much of this has focused on the ‘gaps’ in attainment and achievement between children from the wealthier and poorer households and the evaluation of intervention strategies. This has helped to generate a more sophisticated understanding of the effects of poverty within the professional body of educators (in the school sector and Further Education and Higher Education sectors) and encourage an increasing awareness and application of research findings and government data. Much of the research has focused on the following key issues: early years and attainment in literacy and numeracy, rural poverty, school leaver destinations and mentoring schemes. Many of these key issues are, of course highly relevant in other parts of the UK and in other parts of the world (McKinney, 2014)

#### *Early Years and Attainment in literacy and numeracy*

The focus of attention on the attainment gap in Scotland is primarily on literacy and numeracy. The gap begins in the early years and the effect of this gap continues in subsequent schooling (Sosu and Ellis; 2014; Sime et. al., 2015). Sosu and Ellis (2014) reported that significant gaps have been identified in vocabulary and problem solving for children aged between three and five. The gap in vocabulary between children from low income households and high-income households was thirteen months by the age of five. The gap in problem solving by age five was ten months. Sime et al. (2015) have recommended that there should be more investment in high quality early years education to address the early gap and that families should be supported to enhance the quality of the home learning environment for the children.

The ways in which the Scottish Government collates evidence has changed in recent years. The Scottish survey of Literacy and Numeracy (SSLN) which provided information on the primary and secondary stages was discontinued in 2016 and replaced by a new annual collection of statistics from the teacher professional judgement data collection (Scottish Government, 2017b). These statistics are partly based on the controversial Scottish National Standardised Assessments which were introduced in 2017. The online tests take place at P1, P4, P7 and S3 (Scottish Government, 2018c). The Scottish Government states that the teacher professional judgement data provides

diagnostic information on aspects of Reading, Writing and Numeracy. The latest report indicates that children from the most deprived areas (according to SIMD data) did not perform as well as children from the least deprived areas. The largest gap in primary schools was in writing at the P7 level and the smallest gap in primary was in listening and talking at P1. The largest gap at the S3 level was in numeracy.

### *Rural Poverty*

Rural Poverty has a major impact on families with limited income. Rural areas can be categorized as *accessible rural areas* and *remote rural areas*. Accessible rural areas are described as being less than half an hour's travel from the nearest town of more than 10,000 people. Some of these have become 'commuter towns' and the relative ease of access to services in the towns for the 'commuters' is not shared by those on low income. Remote rural areas are characterized by smaller villages and lower populations. People on low income in rural areas, especially remote rural areas, can face significant challenges such as fuel poverty, higher cost of food and personal goods and services, low accessibility to services and goods which can often only be redressed by lengthy travelling and the use of infrequent and costly public transport (Scottish Government, 2009). The centralization of services in rural areas, again especially in remote rural areas, has resulted in some local services such as schools being relocated and some children having to travel considerable distances on a daily basis. There are other issues about young people who have left school and wish to undertake training, education or employment and expensive public transport costs may be a barrier to accessing these opportunities.

### *Attainment and School Leaver Destinations*

The Scottish Government compiles annual statistics on attainment and leaver destinations. Attainment in public examinations is important for entry into Further and Higher Education. McKinney et al. (2012, 2013) demonstrated a direct correlation between levels of poverty and deprivation and attainment in secondary schools in Glasgow (Glasgow, the largest city in Scotland, records the highest level of child poverty). This has implications for young people and schools in parts of Glasgow (and other parts of Scotland) and there have been a number of small scale interventions designed to assist young people from backgrounds of poverty and deprivation in entry to Higher Education. These include a mentoring programme at a secondary school in Glasgow aimed at helping these young people prepare for public examinations, navigate the application processes and negotiate the parameters of Higher Education (Wilson et. al., 2014). Glasgow Caledonian University's *Caledonian Club* has been operating since 2008 to support five of the twenty-three learning communities across the city to raise aspirations, enhance skills sets and enable young people to understand the benefits of positive educational outcomes (McKendrick, 2015).

Attainment and entry into Higher Education is best understood in the wider context of positive leaver destinations. This leaver destination data collected annually by the Scottish Government is designed to track the destinations of young people leaving school and the percentage who achieve a positive destination (Scottish Government, 2019e). The evidence is collected in two phases. The initial destinations data is based on the information on young people three months after they have left school. The follow-up survey is conducted nine months after they have left school. Positive



destinations are designated as Higher Education, Further Education, employment, training, voluntary work and activity agreements. Employment includes Modern Apprenticeships. The most recent data at the time of writing, 2017/18, indicates that 93.2% of young people were in a positive destination nine months after leaving school. The data demonstrates a steady increase in positive destinations since 2009/10 from 85.2% to 93.2%, the increase being manifest in Higher Education (34.2% to 39%) and in employment (23% to 28.3%). In terms of overall positive destinations for 2017/18, there is a gap of 8.6% between the 20% most deprived areas (using SIMD) and the 20% least deprived areas. This is a marked improvement on the gap of 20.2% from 2009/10 and the figure has steadily decreased over that period of time.

There have been improved figures for young people from the 20% most deprived areas. The number of young people classified in other destinations (unemployed seeking, unemployed, unknown) has dropped from 26.5% in 2009/10 to 11.8% in 2017/18. The figure for Higher Education has increased from 16.4% in 2009/10 to 24.1% in 2017/18. The figure for employment has increased from 19.8% in 2009/10 to 26.6% in 2017/18. There has been little variance in the figures for Further Education, 29.9% in 2009/10 and 32% in 2017/18 and a decrease in training, 7.0% in 2009/10 and 3.4% in 2017/2018.

There is still a significant gap in one of the categories of positive leaver destination. The gap between the young people from the 20% most deprived areas and the young people from the 20% least deprived areas in Higher education is 34.8% for 2017/18. This has decreased very little since 2009/10 when the gap was 38.1%. This means that in 2017/18, there were 24.1% from the 20% most deprived areas who were in Higher Education compared to 58.9% of young people from the 20% least deprived areas. Further, while the nine month follow-up survey is very helpful in providing some information on whether people stay at that destination, it does not take into account drop-out rates after the first year of Higher Education or Further Education.

McKinney et. al. (2012, 2103) demonstrated that there was no direct correlation between levels of poverty and initial positive leaver destinations (excluding Higher Education) in Glasgow. McKinney et al. reported on schools that recorded high levels of poverty and deprivation in the pupil population, which have been highly successful in helping young people into initial school leaver destinations. Nevertheless, it is important to track the progress of young people from the most deprived backgrounds. This can be illustrated by the trends emerging in Modern Apprentice achievement rates. Young people from the most deprived areas are more likely to start Modern Apprenticeships. In 2018/19, 24.3% of the Modern Apprenticeship starts were from young people in the 20% most deprived areas compared to 13.7% from those in the 20% least deprived areas. It is valuable to probe the achievement rates of Modern Apprentices. In 2018/19, the achievement rate was 76% (21,767 achievements and 28,461 leavers), a slight increase on the figure of 74% (19,387 achievements and 26,258 leavers) for 2014/15 but a slight decrease from 78% (20,309 achievements and 26,101 leavers) for 2017/18 (Skills Development Scotland 2019). The figures indicate that 26% did not achieve in 2014/15, 22% did not achieve in 2017/18 and 24% in 2018/19. Skills Development Scotland (2016) surveyed a sample of Modern Apprentice 'completers' and 'non-completers' to map their progress. There were encouraging signs that over 90% of completers were in work six months after completion. The common reasons for non-completion included: offer of better employment (16%); redundancy (13%); got a

more interesting job (12%) and got a job with better terms and conditions (12%). Obtaining a 'job with better terms and conditions' is a positive reason to be a non-completer, but it would be instructive to have more information on what constitutes the less specific 'better employment' and 'more interesting job'. This raises questions about the quality and the sustainability of some of the employment opportunities that are available to young people, especially those from deprived backgrounds (McKinney et. al., 2013).

## **Responses to the impact of child poverty on school education**

There have been a number of initiatives and strategies to address the continuing challenges of Child poverty and the impact of child poverty in Scotland. These have emanated from the Scottish Government, from trade unions and poverty action groups.

### *Poverty Action Group*

The Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland produced *The Cost of the School Day* in 2015. *The Cost of the School Day Project* aimed to discover how education policies and practices can have an impact on the participation and school experiences of children and young people from households that experience low income. The project also sought information on how education policies and school practices can be designed to reduce or remove stigma, exclusion or disadvantage for children and young people from low income households. The report was based on a qualitative study which drew data from eight primary and secondary schools in the city of Glasgow. The study included 339 children between P5 (primary) and S6 (the last year of secondary schooling in Scotland) and 111 staff. These schools are located in areas of varying degrees of deprivation. Glasgow, as has been stated above, experiences the highest level of child poverty in Scotland.

The report identifies the key areas in which there are serious challenges for children and families on low income. School uniform remains the cheapest option for families on low income, but the purchase and replacement of school uniform is still a cost (even with Government aid). There is no financial support for travel costs to school for those who live less than 2 miles from the school (primary school) and 3 miles from the school (secondary school). As these families will normally have to rely on public transport this can incur high costs. Children from low income households may not have some of the equipment that children are expected to bring to school. The report points out that income can have an effect on belonging to a friendship group and there can be stigma and exclusion associated with being a child from a low-income household. Some aspects of school life are highly problematic for children who belong to families on low income: fun events, school clubs and the expectation that children will have access to computers at home. One of the important issues raised by the report concerns free school meals. The report emphasises the points already raised above. The free school meals benefit does provide a lunchtime meal for children who are eligible but not all families that are entitled apply for free school meals and not all children who are entitled and have access to them do in fact take them.

The conclusion of the report is focused on the views of children on what helps to remove poverty-based exclusion and stigma at school. The views include a combination of providing information on the support that is available to parents and a greater

understanding of the implications of daily life for children from families on low income. This extends to practical help in terms of lending the equipment required for school work and for recreational activity and to ensuring fundraising activities do not require a financial contribution from families but also calls for a change in attitude within schools that will create a greater sensitivity about potential exclusion and stigma for children from families that struggle to meet the hidden costs of the school day.

### *Trade Unions*

The Educational Institute of Scotland which is Scotland's largest and most influential trade union has launched a Child Poverty campaign through the EIS Equality Committee. The campaign has produced a series of documents for the membership and for a wider readership. The initial document is *Face up to Child Poverty* (EIS, 2015). This document examined the causes and effects of child poverty, the impact of poverty on children in the school and the ways in which schools and teachers can 'poverty proof' schools. The report identified the effects of hunger on the health and wellbeing of children and the effects on their ability to concentrate on their school work. The report also examined the hidden costs of school – the price of school uniform, equipment, school trips, fun events, charity and fundraising activities and the challenges in some households to provide the resources to support homework activities.

A follow-up document, *Face up to Child Poverty, Survey session 2016-17* (EIS, 2018a) provides the results from a survey of EIS members perceptions of how poverty is having an impact on the classroom. While there is no discussion of the size of the sample in the survey, the survey did include responses from teachers in 31 of the 32 local authorities in Scotland. A large number of respondents (59%) commented that they had observed an increase in the number of children in their schools who are experiencing poverty. There is a perception in the membership (53%) that the number of children in schools who have little or no food or snacks has increased and 24% have noticed an increase in the attendance at breakfast clubs.

There are similar serious findings in relation to the perceived changes in the impact of poverty on the mental health of the young people in school. A large number of those surveyed (77%) perceived that there has been an increase in signs of mental health as indicated in anxiety, stress, low mood, extremes of mood and aggression. There were also perceptions of increased signs of ill health (56%) and fluctuating standards of personal appearance and hygiene (61%). There is a perception (75%) of an increase in the number of young people who are unable to concentrate in class and that there has been an increase (85%) in behaviour issues. A significant number of respondents (72%) stated that they had seen an increase in the number of children who were attending school without equipment. This included stationery, books, bags and equipment for PE. There was also a view (46%) that there has been an increase in the number of children who were unable to complete homework because they did not have access to IT at home. Worryingly, the respondents (36%) have witnessed an increase in the number of children who were not dressed in uniform (where this is expected) and an increase (67%) in the number of children who were not dressed in an appropriate manner for the weather. Forty-seven percent of the respondents have seen a rise (47%) in the number of parents/guardians who cannot afford to pay for school trips or contribute to school fund raising activities (42%).

This document also provides some explanation of how schools are responding to the manifestations of the rising level of poverty. Schools are responding to the physical and resource needs of the children. Some schools have introduced breakfast clubs and/or after school study sessions that provide food. Some schools have established links with local foodbanks (EIS, 2018b). School uniform is provided in some schools and some schools provide free equipment to children. It is reported that individual teachers provide food for those children who have not eaten at breakfast or lunchtime and fund uniform for some children.

There are some important points to be raised about the EIS campaign and the work of the Child Poverty Action Group. First, they have both consulted people who are affected by the impact of poverty on school education. The EIS consulted the membership of the union and the Child Poverty Action Group consulted school children and school staff. Second, they have identified the hidden costs of schooling and the visible effects of poverty that can be discerned in schools on a daily basis. The EIS documents have identified hunger as an increasing issue for young people and the effects this has on their physical and mental health and learning. Third, there are signs of a marked increase in intervention by individual teachers in schools and new policies or action in schools to attempt to ameliorate some of the worst manifestations of poverty. There is also a move towards providing recommendations for schools on how to address the serious issues that have arisen because of the increased levels of poverty in the school population.

### **The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017**

The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act was introduced in February 2017 and set ambitious targets to reduce the levels of child poverty by 2030. The targets are that there will be less than 10% of children living in relative poverty, less than 5% living in absolute poverty, less than 5% living with combined low income and material deprivation and less than 5% in persistent poverty (families on low incomes in three years out of four) (Scottish Government, 2017c). This is supported by a *Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2018-2022* (Scottish Government, 2018c). The delivery plan aims to support those in employment to further their careers and help those who are in unemployment to move into work. It also aims to provide targeted aid in practical terms: a new minimum school clothing grant across Scotland; practical support for children's meals during school holidays and new support for childcare.

### *Contemporary developments – towards collaboration*

The Scottish Government has introduced a number of high-profile initiatives to address the poverty-related educational attainment gap. The Government funded School Improvement Partnership Programme (SIPP) initiated a new era of collaboration and a sharper focus on evidence-based interventions. SIPP commenced on November 2013 seeking to promote collaboration between schools, local authorities and Education Scotland (Chapman et. al., 2016). The programme supported practitioners in schools to identify the most pressing local challenges in attainment and wider engagement, for example, parental engagement. It encouraged local authorities and individual schools to work together, to share practice and to develop local interventions at the classroom level. The progress in each project was evaluated by the Robert Owen Centre, University of Glasgow and local practitioners. The lessons learned from this large scale

programme were that the teachers, individually and collectively, acquired greater knowledge and understanding of the local context, they became more skilled in practitioner enquiry and evaluation and they felt that they were more empowered to tackle educational inequality.

The Scottish Attainment Challenge was launched in February 2015 with the ultimate aim of ensuring that ‘every child has the same opportunity to succeed’ (Scottish Government, 2016b). The attainment challenge was underpinned by the National Improvement Framework, the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence and Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) and is a collaboration between the Scottish Government (through Education Scotland) and local authorities. The main foci are improvement in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. The initiative began with nine authorities identified as containing the highest levels of deprivation. These authorities were awarded extra funding to address local challenges in the three key areas. The additional funding provided the nine authorities with much needed additional resources, however, this failed to address schools in other authorities with a high number of children from backgrounds of poverty and deprivation. Subsequently, The Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) (2016 – 2021) evolved from the attainment challenge and provided funds to individual schools across the country to close the poverty related attainment gap.

The most recent initiative is the Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs) (Scottish Government, 2018d). The six RICs bring together local authorities and Education Scotland to collaborate on securing excellence and equity in education. The early stages of this initiative have involved local authorities coming together to establish shared visions and identifying areas for collaborative working.

## **Concluding Remarks**

In this chapter we have demonstrated that the contemporary discussion and critical examination of poverty, child poverty and the impact of child poverty in Scotland has intensified and has become better informed. The greater awareness of government provided statistical data is complemented by other forms of evidence, such as the data on the uptake of food banks. The reports of the EIS campaign and Child Poverty Action Group provide detailed and very practical accounts of how children are excluded from educational and recreational activities within and beyond the school day. This exclusion has a serious impact on the learning and the physical and mental well-being of the children. The effects of stigma are rooted in being unable to respond in a material way (resources, equipment, uniform) to the expected norms of school life and it can also be felt in relationships with other children.

We have also examined the different measurements of poverty and child poverty and highlighted the key interventions in schooling to address inequality. The measurement of poverty and child poverty still uses threshold measurements but there is an increasing use of more sophisticated modes of measurement. The series of interventions in schooling are focused on attainment and achievement, literacy and numeracy and on health and well-being. The focus on health and well-being is illustrated by the national provision of free school meals for all children from primary one to primary three and the stress on health and well-being in the Scottish Attainment Challenge. There is still ample scope to increase the emphasis on health and well-being (Mowat and Macleod, 2019).

The complexity of the causes, manifestations and effects of child poverty and the impact on schooling in Scotland have become evident in this chapter. This includes some of the themes mentioned in the introduction, gender, disability, child carers and new arrival children, and the issues of the social and cultural capital that underpin initiatives such as the mentoring programme and the Caledonian Club. There are innovative new research findings that are emerging from the University of Aberdeen about the challenges for student teachers in engaging with children from backgrounds of poverty and deprivation (Graham et. al. 2018).

The final comments will revisit two issues that affect all of the children living in poverty: low income and food insecurity. The ambitious aims of the Scottish Government to reduce levels of child poverty by 2030 includes addressing wider societal issues such as unemployment, working poverty and a range of initiatives to support families on low income. Importantly, there are new grants for families on low income who have children in the early years. Providing further financial aid will help those on low income but the statistics of the levels of poverty and child poverty in Scotland remain alarmingly high. The unprecedented and ongoing Child Poverty Campaign by the EIS, a major Trade Union, is recognition of the severity of the problem. Tackling child poverty cannot simply be reduced to levels of income, but a low level of income, of financial resource, limits possibilities and limits the level of home support that can be provided to children throughout their schooling.

There is still the major challenge of food insecurity for children of school age from backgrounds of poverty and deprivation. The reports from the Trussell Group and the Independent Food Aid Network indicate a marked increase on demand for foodbanks in Scotland. North Lanarkshire Council has introduced free school meals during the holidays and the weekends for all ages of primary school children in 2018/2019. This ensures that the children have at least one full meal a day. The Scottish Government announced extra funding for local authorities and charities to provide food and activities for more than 46,500 children in school holidays in 2019 (Scottish Government, 2019f). This level of intervention is a sobering reminder of the daily challenges faced by many children as they struggle to negotiate the demands of state-funded schooling.

## References

- Adamson, P. (2012) *Measuring Child Poverty*. Unicef. Innocenti Report Card 10. Italy: Unicef.
- Anderson, R. (2018) 'Historical Perspectives'. in T.G.K Bryce, W.M. Humes, D. Gillies and A. Kennedy (eds) *Scottish Education*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 99-107.
- Chapman, C., Lowden, K., Chestnutt, H., Hall, S., McKinney, S. and Friel, N. (2016) *The School Improvement Partnership Programme: Sustaining Collaboration and Enquiry to Tackle Educational Inequality*, Education Scotland.  
<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/documents/sippfinalreportsept16.pdf>
- Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland (2015) *The Cost of the School Day*.

[http://www.cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/CPAG-Scot-Cost-Of-School-Day-Report%28Oct15%29\\_1.pdf](http://www.cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/CPAG-Scot-Cost-Of-School-Day-Report%28Oct15%29_1.pdf)

Congreve, E. and McCormick, J. (2018) *Poverty in Scotland 2018*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

<https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/poverty-scotland-2018>

Educational Institute of Scotland (2015) *Face up to Child Poverty*.

<https://www.eis.org.uk/campaigns/child-poverty>

Educational Institute of Scotland (2018a) *Face up to Child Poverty Survey*.

<https://www.eis.org.uk/campaigns/child-poverty>

Educational Institute of Scotland (2018b) *Face up to Child Poverty. Respondents' Comments*.

<https://www.eis.org.uk/campaigns/child-poverty>

Forbes, J. and Sime, D. (2016) 'Relations between Child Poverty and New Migrant Child Status, Academic Attainment and Social Participation: Insights Using Social Capital Theory', *Education Sciences*, 6(24), 1-15.

Gillies, D. (2018) 'The History of Scottish Education since Devolution', in T.G.K Bryce, W.M. Humes, D. Gillies and A. Kennedy (eds) *Scottish Education*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 86-95.

Glasgow City Council (2019) *Clothing Grants and Free School Meals*.

<https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/article/17885/Clothing-Grants-and-Free-School-Meals>

Gov.UK (2019a) *Family Resources Survey*.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/family-resources-survey--2>

Gov.UK (2019b) *Devolution Settlement: Scotland*.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/devolution-settlement-scotland>

Gov.UK (2019c) *Universal Credit*.

<https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit/how-youre-paid>

Graham, A., MacDougall, L. Robson, D. and Mtika, P. (2018) 'Exploring practicum: student teachers' social capital relations in schools with high numbers of pupils living in poverty'. *Oxford Review of Education*, 45(1), 119-135.

Independent Food Aid Network (2019) *Scottish independent Food Parcel Data Collection project*.

<http://www.foodaidnetwork.org.uk/food-bank-data-in-scotland>

McGinley, B. (2018) 'Local Governance in Scottish Education', in T.G.K Bryce, W.M. Humes, D. Gillies and A. Kennedy (eds) *Scottish Education*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp 184-193.

McKendrick, J.H. (2015) 'The spectre of poverty in distant futures without university: reflecting on aspirations for their pre-adolescent children from parents from deprived neighbourhoods in Glasgow', *Scottish Educational Review*, 47(2): 100-104.

McKinney, S.J. (2014) 'The relationship of child poverty to school education', *Improving Schools*, 17(3): 203-216.

McKinney, S.J., Hall, S., Lowden, K., McClung, M. and Cameron, L. (2012) 'The relationship between poverty and deprivation, educational attainment and positive school leaver destinations in Glasgow secondary schools', *Scottish Educational Review*, 44(1): 33-45.

McKinney, S.J., Hall, S., Lowden, K., McClung, M. and Cameron, L. (2013) 'Supporting school leavers in areas of deprivation into initial positive school leaver destinations', *Improving Schools*, 16 (1): 67-83.

McKinney, S.J., McAdam, J., Britton, A., Crichton, H. and Arizpe, E. (2016) 'Managing the Learning of new arrival children in mainstream schooling', in E. Christopher (ed) *International Management and Intercultural Communication*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.114-131.

Millar, J. and F. Bennett (2017) 'Universal Credit: Assumptions, Contradictions and Virtual Reality', *Social Policy and Society*, 16(2): 169-182.

Mowat, J. and G. Macleod. (2019) *Poverty, attainment and wellbeing: Making a difference to the lives of children and young people*, Scottish universities insight institute.

mygov.scot (2019) *School meals*.  
<https://www.mygov.scot/school-meals/>

Redford, M. (2018) 'Central Government and the Administration of Scottish Education', in T.G.K Bryce, W.M. Humes, D. Gillies and A. Kennedy (eds) *Scottish Education*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 175-183.

Scottish Government Social Research (2009) *The Experience of Rural Poverty in Scotland*.  
<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/262658/0078512.pdf>

Scottish Government (2016a) *Introducing the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2016*.  
<https://www2.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00504809.pdf>

Scottish Government (2016b) *The Scottish Attainment Challenge*.  
<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/Schools/Raisingeducationalattainment>

Scottish Government (2017a) *Children in families with limited resources across Scotland 2014-2016*.  
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/children-families-limited-resources-scotland-2014-2016/pages/8/>



Scottish Government (2017b) *The Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy (SSLN)*.  
<https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/SSLN>

Scottish Government (2017c) *Child Poverty (Scotland) Act, 2017*.  
<https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Social-Welfare/IncomePoverty/ChildPovertyStrategy>

Scottish Government (2018a) *Young Carers*.  
<https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Health/Support-Social-Care/Unpaid-Carers/ProgrammesandInitiatives/youngcarers>

Scottish Government (2018b) *School Meals Dataset 2018*.  
<https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/SchoolMealsDatasets/schmeals2018>

Scottish Government (2018c) *Every Child, Every Chance. The Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2018-2022*.  
<https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2018/03/child-chance-tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-2018-22/documents/00533606-pdf/00533606-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/00533606.pdf>

Scottish Government (2018d) *Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs) Interim Review*.  
<https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/research-and-analysis/2019/02/regional-improvement-collaboratives-rics-interim-review/documents/00545834-pdf/00545834-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/00545834.pdf>

Scottish Government (2019a) *What do we know about in-work poverty in Scotland? Interim Report*.  
<https://www2.gov.scot/Resource/0054/00546299.pdf>

Scottish Government (2019b) *Pupils in Scotland 2018*.  
<https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/dspupcensus/dspupcensus18>

Scottish Government (2019c) *Children in families with limited resources across Scotland 2014-2017*.  
<https://www.gov.scot/news/children-in-families-with-limited-resources-across-scotland-2014-2017/>

Scottish Government (2019d) *Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland: 2015-2018*.  
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/poverty-income-inequality-scotland-2015-18/>

Scottish Government (2019e) *Attainment and Leaver Destinations, 2017/18*.  
<https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/leavedestla>

Scottish Government (2019f) *Holiday Meals for Children*.  
<https://www.gov.scot/news/holiday-meals-for-children/>

Sime, D., Fassetta, G. and McClung, M. (2014) *Roma Families' engagement with education and other services in Glasgow*.

[https://pureportal.strath.ac.uk/files-asset/39688102/Sime\\_et\\_al\\_roma\\_families\\_engagement\\_with\\_education.pdf](https://pureportal.strath.ac.uk/files-asset/39688102/Sime_et_al_roma_families_engagement_with_education.pdf)

Sime, D., Forbes, J. and Lerpiniere (2015) *Poverty and Children's Education*.

[http://www.scottishinsight.ac.uk/Portals/50/Children%20&%20YP%20Inequality/PolicyBrief\\_SUIIProgramme\\_Education.pdf](http://www.scottishinsight.ac.uk/Portals/50/Children%20&%20YP%20Inequality/PolicyBrief_SUIIProgramme_Education.pdf)

Skills Development Scotland (2016) *Modern Apprenticeship Intermediate Outcomes*.

<https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/42085/ma-outcomes-report-2016-final.pdf>

Skills Development Scotland (2019) *Modern Apprenticeship Statistics. Full Year Report 2018/19*.

<http://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/45688/modern-apprenticeship-statistics-quarter-4-2018-19.pdf>

Sosu and Ellis (2014) *Closing the Attainment Gap in Scottish Education*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

<https://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/default/files/jrf/migrated/files/education-attainment-scotland-full.pdf>

Taylor, C. (2018) 'The Reliability of Free School Meal Eligibility as a Measure of Socio-Economic Disadvantage: Evidence from the Millennium Cohort Study in Wales', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 66, (1): 29-51.

The Trussell Trust (2019) *Record 1.6M Food Bank Parcels Given to People in past year as the Trussell Trust calls for end to Universal Credit Five Week Wait*.

<https://www.trusselltrust.org/2019/04/25/record-1-6m-food-bank-parcels/>

Thompson, S. (2015) *The Low-Pay, no Pay Cycle*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

<https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/low-pay-no-pay-cycle>

Wilson, A. Hunter, K., Spohrer, K., Bruner, R and Beasley, A. (2014) 'Mentoring into higher education: A useful addition to the landscape of widening access to higher education?' *Scottish Educational Review*, 46 (2): 18-35.