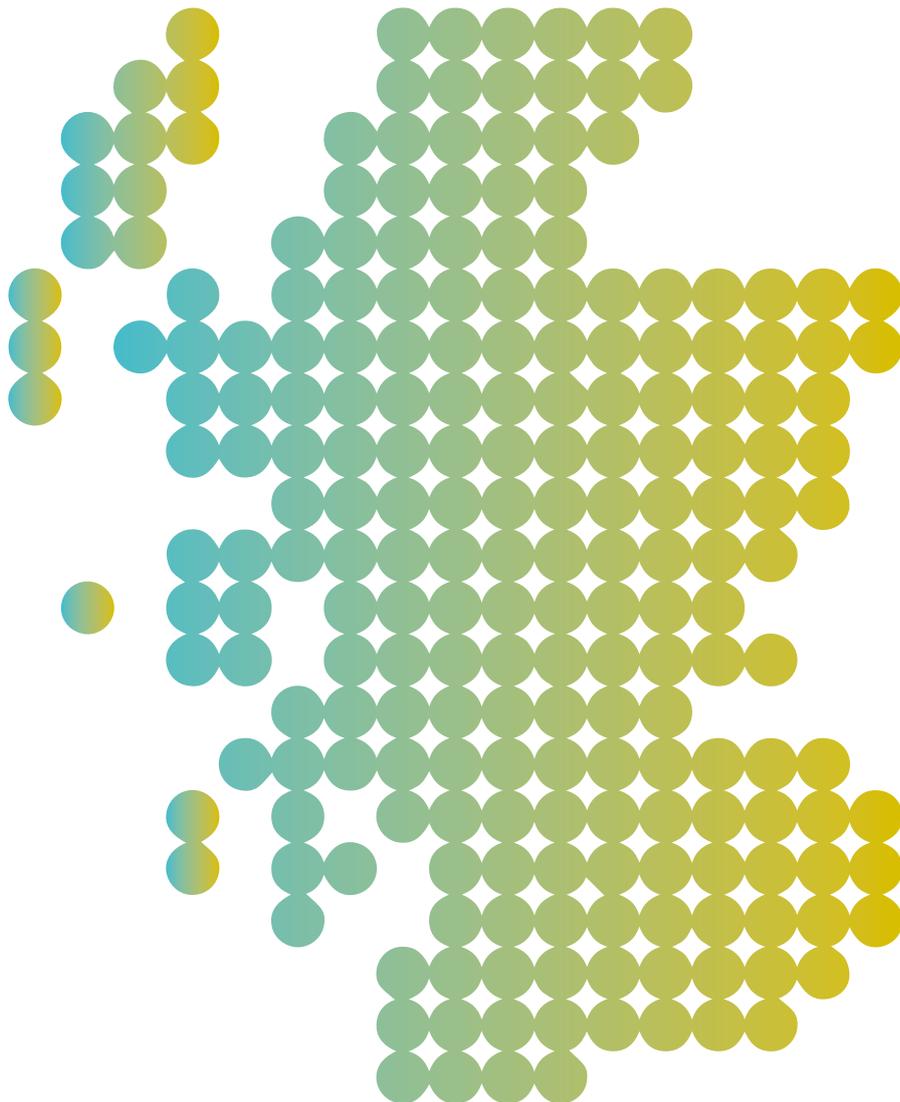




POVERTY AND
INEQUALITY
COMMISSION

INTERSECTIONALITY: REVEALING THE REALITIES OF POVERTY AND INEQUALITY IN SCOTLAND



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Summary

What do we mean by intersectionality and why is it relevant to poverty?

Experience of poverty cannot be disentangled from other inequalities that shape society in Scotland. Structural inequalities – including along lines of gender, race or ethnicity, disability and nationality or migration status – have intrinsic connections to economic disadvantage. These factors shape how wealth and prosperity is shared across Scotland, and how and where poverty is concentrated. Intersectionality is the idea that these different factors are not separate single issues but rather interconnected forms of injustice – creating distinct experiences of privilege and oppression.

These intersections matter and have real consequences in the day-to-day lives of people in Scotland. An Asian woman may have a distinct experience of workplace discrimination, or a disabled person could face unique barriers to adequate health care, both of which could have consequences for their economic security. But most importantly, understanding the reality of inequalities in Scotland is key to building effective solutions.

By understanding the interactions between the forces that drive inequality, and how they shape the multiple identities and the social positions that people hold, we will be better positioned to make progress on reducing poverty and inequality in Scotland.

The importance of taking an intersectional approach to poverty is underscored by the COVID-19 crisis. As many have observed, while we may be weathering the same storm, we are not all in the same boat. Left unchecked, the pandemic is expected to deepen existing inequalities. An intersectional approach will be essential to understanding the lived experience of poverty and inequality throughout this crisis, and to inform better solutions to shape Scotland's recovery.

What did we do in this research?

To inform the work of the Poverty and Inequality Commission and others as Scotland enters a crucial decade in reducing poverty and inequality in Scotland, we:

- Undertook a review of existing research that looks at intersecting inequalities in theory and practice
- Reviewed and summarised the existing policy and practice context in Scotland as it relates to intersectionality and inequalities
- Spoke with experts by experience who have direct experience on intersecting inequalities in Scotland
- Spoke to policy experts from the third sector and academia to get their perspective on how intersecting inequalities are understood in Scotland

The findings of this report bring together the insights from all these activities to develop recommendations for intersectional approaches to both developing and scrutinising policy – and as to how the Poverty and Inequality Commission can put an intersectional approach into practice in its own work.

What did we find?

1. **A lack of intersectional data on outcomes.** This slows progress in understanding and addressing inequalities. Without regular intersectional analysis of outcomes across government, evidence gaps will persist, and key intersections will remain invisible.
2. **Policymaking processes rarely take an intersectional approach** when identifying problems or developing solutions. The limitation of policy-makers perspectives needs to be better acknowledged and new tools are needed to bring people into the policymaking process.
3. **Lack of policymaking coherence and policymaker competence when it comes to intersectionality.** Tackling inequalities requires a sustained focus across government and public service providers on improving outcomes, coherence, and policymaking competence in understanding how structural inequalities such as gender, race, disability and migration status shape experiences and outcomes in Scotland.
4. **‘One size fits all’ approaches to narrowing inequalities leave people behind.** Policymakers should seek to better understand who existing policy interventions and public service provision models serve better or less well, with a focus on lowering barriers to accessing services and resources for particular groups.
5. **Policymaking processes in Scotland reinforce siloed approaches to tackling inequality.** Policymaking processes should be opened up to a wider range of voices and experts across Scotland, and expertise on how and where inequalities intersect should be sought out where it is not already engaged.
6. **There are no shortcuts or silver bullets.** Addressing the structural inequalities that fuel poverty and inequality in Scotland will take dedicated, sustained work and appropriate resourcing across all areas of government. This will require a particular focus on systemic racism in Scotland, which is not currently well understood or addressed across policymaking.

What do we recommend for the Poverty and Inequality Commission?

1. **The Poverty and Inequality Commission should examine their own working practices and develop a strategy for embedding intersectional analysis across their work.** It should include analysis of how structural inequalities such as race, gender, disability and class create distinct experiences of poverty and focus on designing solutions that recognise and respond to the reality of people’s lives.

2. **The Commission should embed partnership working with experts by experience at the heart of their work on understanding poverty and inequality in Scotland and on designing policy solutions. This should be supported by the development of a 'gold standard' framework for participatory working, and work with experts in structural inequalities.** This should focus on learning from experts in co-production, establishing lasting relationships with communities and community groups, and on hearing from those who are often furthest away from support. Partnership work should focus not just on understanding barriers and drivers of poverty, but on building solutions. This should be supported by expert facilitation and take a wellbeing-based approach, ensuring participants are equal partners in designing work from the outset. Where some direct experience approaches have focused solely on capturing people's experiences, the Commission's work should go further by offering a critical reading of those experiences that seeks to identify systemic barriers facing particular groups.
3. **The Commission should partner with community groups across Scotland to build long-term relationships with people with direct experience of poverty and/or other forms of inequality.** Having designed a co-production approach with experts, this work could prioritise relationships with groups that are less often heard from in the poverty debate in Scotland, including asylum seekers, refugees and Gypsy/travellers. From this foundation, the Commission could establish a broader advisory group of people with direct experience of poverty and/or other dimensions of inequality, who participate in the Commission's work defining problems and developing solutions, working in a paid capacity.
4. **The Commission should gather evidence and develop recommendations on how to address persistent gaps in understanding of ethnic minority groups' experiences of poverty in Scotland.** The Commission should partner with experts in race and ethnic inequalities to gather evidence and map gaps in understanding of minority ethnic groups' experiences and how they relate to poverty. This should inform recommendations to address the specific weaknesses in integrating an understanding of racial and ethnic inequalities into work to tackle poverty and inequality in Scotland. This could span intersectional analysis of minority ethnic women, minority ethnic disabled people, minority ethnic migrants (including settled and new migrant experiences), and younger and older minority ethnic people's experiences and outcomes.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Poverty cannot be disentangled from the wider inequalities that shape our society. As a result, the risk of experiencing poverty is not evenly spread across Scotland. Instead, economic disadvantage is intrinsically linked to other structural inequalities in our society – including along lines of gender, race or ethnicity, disability, and nationality (Rahman 2019). People – and groups of people – also experience poverty and disadvantage differently. To understand different experiences and design policy and services that sustainably reduce, rather than exacerbate, inequalities, we need to first understand how our different identities and social positions shape our lives.

Intersectionality is the idea that these different identities are not separate, but overlapping, and that these different elements of our identities interact and create distinct experiences of privilege and oppression. For the purposes of this report, we define intersectionality as ‘the interaction between gender, race and other categories of difference... and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power’ (Davis 2008). In our day to day lives, these interactions might result in, for example, a disabled woman facing distinct barriers to accessing health care, or an Asian woman experiencing distinct forms of workplace discrimination. Intersectionality challenges the idea that we can understand the reality of inequality by dealing with systems that create and sustain inequality (e.g. class, race, gender) separately. By better understanding the interactions between the multiple identities and social positions that people hold in the real world, or “intersectionality”, we can make real and sustainable progress on reducing poverty and inequality in Scotland.

By shining a light on the complex reality of inequality and how it shapes people’s lives in Scotland, we can develop more tailored and more effective interventions, with potential to improve outcomes for many more people. Intersectionality offers a lens through which to better understand the drivers of inequality, an analytical approach that better illuminates the outcomes inequalities create, and the opportunity to design the joined-up interventions required to tackle inequality effectively. Without adopting an intersectional approach, we limit our analysis to a ‘single axis’ understanding of people’s lives. In doing so, we risk failing to understand people’s lived experiences of inequality, and the barriers different groups of people face. This in turn limits the effectiveness of policy solutions, risking a ‘one size fits all’ approach to tackling inequalities that leaves those facing multiple, overlapping barriers behind.

Since the financial crisis of 2007-8 and the Great Recession that followed, there has been little progress in reducing levels of poverty and inequality in Scotland. At the same time economic growth, alongside growth in pay and living standards, has been persistently weak. A decade on, and despite ambitious legally binding child poverty targets set by the Scottish Government for 2030, rates of relative poverty were projected to rise further, even before the global pandemic hit. The Covid-19 pandemic and the economic crisis that has resulted from it will serve only to intensify these challenges.

Already, there is clear evidence that the impact of the pandemic is exacerbating existing inequalities. Disabled peoples’ organisations across Scotland have been warning of the additional strain disabled people are under, with over half of their members worried about

food, money or medication (GDA 2020). Economic impact assessments make clear that those whose incomes have been hardest hit so far were already struggling to get by coming into this crisis (Statham et al. 2020), and low-income households stand to be hardest hit (Blundell et al. 2020). Further evidence suggests women and workers from Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic backgrounds will be – or indeed already have been – disproportionately exposed to the economic fallout (Blundell et al. 2020; Parkes et al. 2020). As various commentators have observed, while we may be weathering the same storm, we are not all in the same boat. Without sustained intervention, this crisis stands to deepen longstanding inequalities. An intersectional approach will be essential in understanding lived experiences of poverty and inequality in Scotland throughout this crisis, and to designing solutions that reduce poverty and narrow inequalities through the recovery that follows.

This report outlines the current policy context in Scotland, and how an intersectional understanding of poverty and inequality could lead to better policymaking. We hope this forms the basis of the Poverty and Inequality Commission's work over the coming years as we enter a crucial decade for reducing poverty and inequality in Scotland.

Methodology

Throughout this research, we drew on existing work that examines intersecting inequalities in theory and in practice, reviewed existing policy and practice, and heard from a range of experts. We spoke with experts by experience with direct experience of intersecting inequalities in Scotland, and with policy experts from across the equalities sector and academia, about how far different experiences of poverty and inequality are understood, and what needs to change to build systems and structures that work for people experiencing overlapping forms of disadvantage. All interviews were conducted mid-2020 and insights from them are included throughout this report.

This report brings together findings and insights from a literature review, interviews with policy leads and community representatives in Scotland, a policy and data review, and direct experience interviews. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, which came midway through our field work, substantially altered our approach, as the in-person research we had originally planned was no longer possible, and additional practical and ethical considerations reshaped the direct experience component of the project. In place of direct experience group sessions, where people are brought together to discuss barriers to accessing services and support, and to build solutions, we held one-to-one interviews with a smaller set of individuals. Plans to host a roundtable with policymakers from across Scottish Government were cancelled due to the redeployment of officials in the pandemic response. Engagement with Scottish Government officials will be an important next step for this work.

Direct experience research

We conducted a series of interviews with people across Scotland about their experiences of accessing public services, social security and other forms of government support. Interviews were conducted from May-July 2020, during Covid-19 lockdown. Participants were nominated by organisations in the third sector in Scotland, meaning participants were already accessing some form of services or support. This means insights offered here reflect

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the circumstances of people who have been successful in accessing some form of support – which is not the case among some of the most acute experiences of marginalisation in Scotland. Some participants were able to offer reflections on their experience before they accessed support. This is a limitation that we hope the Commission can move beyond in future work exploring experiences of poverty and the social safety net in Scotland. The practical limitations imposed on qualitative research during Covid-19 lockdown has also affected recruitment for these interviews. However, our sample was designed to prioritise lesser-heard voices and is not intended to be representative.

This research was carried out during the first Covid-19 lockdown, which meant that all conversations were held over the phone or via videocall. Access to an internet connection – via mobile or broadband – remains a significant cost barrier to many people living in poverty or on low income across Scotland, and so we sought out organisation that were already supporting participants through facilitating mobile phone top-ups, other forms of internet access, or access to tablets or computer devices. We consistently heard that this access made a transformative difference to participants’ experiences of this particularly difficult period.

These interviews were designed to provide some insights into the reality of inequality in individual lives across Scotland. They are not intended to provide an example of intersectional analysis in action, but instead, to give an indication of how identity and social position can shape people’s experiences of living on low incomes in Scotland. We place a particular focus on migrant voices, which are often excluded from research on experiences of poverty.

Policy expert interviews

We also conducted interviews with policy experts with expertise in intersecting inequalities in Scotland. These included four formal interviews with policy experts working across the third sector and academia, and two further meetings with experts from specialist anti-racism and disability organisations.

This report aims to take learning from intersectionality – both in theory and in practice – to develop recommendations for intersectional approaches to developing and scrutinising policy, and for how the Poverty and Inequality Commission can put intersectionality into practice its own working practices and approaches to its work.

Chapter 2: What do we mean when we talk about intersectionality?

“There is no such thing as single issue struggles, because we do not live single issue lives” Audre Lorde

The term “intersectionality” was coined in 1989 by critical legal race scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw (Crenshaw 1989). Intersectionality is the understanding that inequalities are ‘interdependent and indivisible from one another’ (Christoffersen 2019). It is a tool to think about how systems of power and oppression, such as racism, sexism, ableism, and classism, construct and interact with one another, and create unique forms of inequality and injustice. While Crenshaw used intersectionality to describe specific forms of discrimination experienced by Black women in the USA, the idea that different dimensions of inequality intersect, creating unique social identities, positions and outcomes, has implications for how we understand inequality in societies across the world.

Intersectionality aims to describe how the multiple identities and social positions people hold interact with each other, and how those interactions shape our lives and experiences of inequality. An intersectional approach encourages us to understand inequalities as multi-dimensional and shaped by our position in the world, and to consider the invisible power relations that affect that position. It aims to challenge us to look beyond a ‘single-axis’ framework of inequality, that focuses on one aspect of a person’s identity or social position. It also challenges the assumption that the experiences of everyone belonging to a group defined by a single characteristic, such as ‘women’, are the same, or that everyone living in poverty has a similar experience of inequality (Crenshaw 1991). With its roots in Black feminist theory, intersectional theory argues that there is no singular group of ‘women’ who experience gender discrimination in the same way – just as there is no singular experience of being poor. Instead of assuming that, for example, gender operates in the same way across all women’s experiences, intersectionality seeks to understand the many different ways in which socio-economic status, race, disability, age, sexuality, nationality, faith and gender identity can shape women’s lives and create distinct forms of inequality. By opening up broad social categories and looking at how inequalities interact, intersectional analysis can support a far richer understanding of how inequalities multiply or compound one another.

Since breaking into the mainstream, intersectionality has been interpreted as a theory, methodology, paradigm, lens or framework (Handkivsky 2014). It has also been criticised as an overly vague analytical tool, lacking a strategy for tackling the forms of discrimination and oppression it describes (Nash 2008). This report seeks to lay out how intersectionality is understood from various viewpoints in Scotland, and how an intersectional approach could help support a better understanding of inequality, and more effective strategies to tackle it.

What is an intersectional approach?

An intersectional approach is a way of thinking about power and inequality in our societies. It shows that human lives cannot be fully understood by thinking about single categories, such as gender, race or socio-economic status. Instead, the reality of people’s lives are multi-dimensional and complex, and experiences are shaped by different factors and social

dynamics operating all at once (Hankivsky 2012). In practice, intersectionality is an idea that presents a profound challenge to traditional understandings of politics and power.

Intersectional analysis is concerned with the **structures and systems that drive inequality**. It encourages us to interrogate the systems and processes that create and sustain inequality (e.g. racism, classism, ageism, ableism, homophobia, sexism) as not separate, but interlinked. It also explores how these systems and processes create and sustain one another and can be best understood as an interlocking system of inequality, not separate layers.

Intersectionality is also **an analytical lens** that provides 'new angles of vision' on the social world (Hill Collins 2014). Intersectionality is both theory and practice. Intersectionality has become 'the primary analytic tool' deployed by feminist and critical race theory scholars to theorise identity and oppression (Nash 2008). As an analytical lens, intersectionality seeks to identify and describe the myriad ways in which multiple identities or social positions overlap or intersect to create distinct experiences of inequality and oppression. This includes an analysis of how power functions and organises social groups to produce both privilege and disadvantage. A key insight from intersectionality is that a person can at once experience privilege from one social category (e.g. race) while being oppressed by another (e.g. gender).

Recognising that there is no essential or universal experience of being e.g. a woman, or being disabled, intersectional analysis also encourages people to look *within* marginalised groups to understand how lived experiences of, for example, sexism and ableism differ where other dimensions of privilege or oppression are in play. In feminist theory and practice, this has shed light on the distinct experiences of groups of women by race/ethnicity, class, ability, migration status, sexuality, age, nationality or a combination of those factors. In doing so, it takes seriously the differences within groups, and how inequality operates differently across where multiple dimensions of oppression are experienced at once (McCall 2005).

This also challenges attempts to understand inequality through the experiences of the typical person in a broad social group. Where non-intersectional approaches might look to understand and describe the experiences of broad categories of people, such as 'women', 'disabled people' or 'Black and minority ethnic groups', intersectionality looks into each of these categories to **understand the differences within and between groups** of women, for example, within and between disabled people, or within and between minority ethnic groups.

An intersectional approach can also seek **to cast light on how and where particular inequalities intersect**: to better understand the experiences of particular people or groups. This could be through shining a light on Black and minority ethnic women's experiences of multiple discriminations in STEM industries in Scotland (Equate 2020); or how characteristics such as race, sexuality and nationality shape disabled people's access to services (Inclusion Scotland 2020). Intersectionality aims to recognise systemic forces that shape power and privilege and how they interact, creating particular experiences of inequality.

Finally, intersectionality is in and of itself **a social justice project** concerned with addressing and transforming these inequalities (Christoffersen 2019). In feminist and anti-racist politics and organising, intersectionality has become a central concept for activists and researchers both in their understanding of power, privilege and oppression, and in approaches to their work. Intersectionality is also concerned with how theory can be put into practice – encouraging researchers, policymakers and practitioners to reflect on our own position and power, and on the role we play in systems that create and sustain inequality (Hill Collins 2014; Hankivsky 2012).

What is it not?

Across academia, politics and public life, the concept of intersectionality has spread in influence and application but has been inconsistently applied and understood. As Sirma Bilge explains: “like other ‘traveling theories’ that move across disciplines and geographies, intersectionality falls prey to widespread misrepresentation, tokenization, displacement, and disarticulation” (Bilge 2013, cited in Cooper 2016). It is important therefore to address what intersectionality is *not*.

Intersectionality is not a synonym for diversity. There is no such thing as an ‘intersectional’ group of people: each of us experiences a combination of inequalities differently. Intersectionality looks at these combinations of inequalities and examines ‘how and why differences are interpreted in privileging and penalising ways’ (Dhamoon, 2011).

Intersectionality is primarily **a tool for understanding invisible power relations and how they shape inequality, not identity** in all its complexity. It looks at “interlocking” systems of oppression, and how these play out in individual lives (Hill Collins 2014). It looks at where systems of power such as “race, gender and class domination” converge, and lays out why interventions designed only to address the results of racism, sexism or poverty will be insufficient to address the reality faced by a woman of colour marginalised by all three systems of power (Crenshaw 1991; Cooper 2016).

Intersectionality is not about adding up different kinds of inequality. It does not look to simply describe the sum of different oppressions, i.e. gender + race + class (Hancock, 2007). Instead, intersectionality aims to shed light on how multiple dimensions and systems of inequality interact with one other and create distinct experiences and outcomes. Scholars of intersectionality stress the importance of seeking to understand distinct experiences of inequality, recognising that social identities or positions and inequality are ‘interdependent’, not mutually exclusive (Bowleg 2008).

Intersectionality is not an ‘oppression Olympics’. Intersectionality is not about pitting different people or groups of people against each other to assess who is the most marginalised or disadvantaged. Instead it tries to understand how different people’s experiences are shaped differently where multiple forms of oppression and disadvantage interact. Intersectional analysis is not about seeking out an individual whose life ticks the greatest number of boxes on a check list of inequalities – it’s about understanding how multiple oppressions can create distinct experiences of inequality and injustice.

Intersectionality is not looking to construct a hierarchy of inequality, where some forms of oppression (e.g. racism, sexism, or ableism) are seen as more important than others. Instead, it's interested in looking at the margins of marginalised groups. An intersectional lens would seek to understand the experiences of a disabled woman, for example, not by understanding experiences of ableism and sexism in siloes, or by assuming that either are a primary factor, but by analysing how these dimensions interact and at points compound inequality. In doing so, it gives us the opportunity to understand how different dimensions of social life “fuse to create unique experiences and opportunities for all groups” (Brown and Misra 2003). Hancock argues that intersectionality prioritises more than one category of analysis equally, recognising that categories are open and fluid, and can shape one another (Hancock 2007).

Intersectional also aims to be ‘**anti-essentialist**’ (Grillo 1995). It challenges the simplifying assumptions we make when we use broad analytical categories and encourages us to look beyond homogenous groups to understand different experiences amongst e.g. women, or particular racialised groups.

How does intersectionality relate to poverty?

Intersectionality can also help us understand the **multi-dimensional nature of poverty** and other forms of inequality. As Oxfam researcher Fenella Porter puts it, “No one is *just* poor, or *just* working class, or *just* a woman, or *just* a disabled person” (Porter 2018). Neither does any single dimension of inequality automatically trump others. Intersectionality enables us to better understand the many dimensions of poverty. By better understanding how structures and systems of power and oppression such as racism, sexism and ableism shape experiences, opportunities and outcomes in our society, we can begin to design more effective interventions to redistribute power and create more equal societies.

Intersectional analysis enables us to look at how invisible power relations shape inequality. We know that unequal power relations are a key driver of poverty (see, for example, Green and Fried 2008) and a lack of power is central to how people experience poverty in Scotland and in societies across the world. Calls for the radical redistribution of power, opportunities and assets have been mainstream among anti-poverty campaigners since the Great Recession of 2007-2009, and in the decade since mainstream economic thinking has turned its attentions towards economic models that can stem growing income and wealth inequalities – including through the Scottish Government’s inclusive growth agenda, adopted from 2015. Central to these questions is an analysis of power in our economies and societies, and how it is shared.

Understanding who has power in our economies and our societies is central to understanding how poverty operates and to developing strategies for a future without it. Intersectionality encourages us to understand how **invisible power relations** shape people’s lives and realities, and it turns the focus onto who has power in the decisions that shape our economy and the societies we live in. Here, intersectionality calls for researchers, officials and policy makers to “**analyse their own power dynamics as much as the world they wish to change**” (Scott-Villiers and Oosterom 2016). This turns the focus onto the organisations

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and institutions that analyse inequality and develop ideas for change – asking who has power in setting those agendas, who has a seat around the table, and whose voices are heard.

An intersectional approach enables us to understand poverty in its wider context of social and economic inequalities. Intersectional analysis can facilitate a better understanding of how people are exposed to poverty and other forms of inequality, and of how people experience different combinations of inequalities differently. In doing so, it can provide insights that can help us to better understand where policy interventions fall short of meeting the needs of particular groups of people, and support the development of more effective policy solutions to end poverty for all.

This research examines tools and strategies for putting the concept of intersectionality into practice, and for developing recommendations that can accelerate its application within policymaking in Scotland. It does so with the aim of equipping Scotland's Poverty and Inequality Commission to begin a programme of work built on an understanding of poverty and inequality as multi-dimensional phenomena, shaped by multiple forces, often at once. In doing so, this work can begin to shed light on experiences of poverty and inequality that are currently rendered invisible, develop a better understanding of the complex reality of inequality in Scotland, and how inequality shapes ordinary people's lives. As Ange-Marie Hancock writes, intersectionality is "*the best chance for an effective diagnosis and ultimately an effective prescription*" (Hancock 2007). Finally, it aims to take lessons from the concept of intersectionality and apply them to policy making processes, so that policy making in Scotland can do a better job of providing support and improving outcomes for people at the margins.

Chapter 3: Experiences of intersecting inequalities

“I think there’s very little understanding of the experience of any particular groups. I think the work that is done on poverty and inequality is largely done as if the population talked about is completely homogenous” Participant, third sector

In this chapter, we explore some key areas in which inequalities interact and create distinct experiences of inequality, drawing from evidence in Scotland and across the UK. We also identify where policy or service provision is taking an intersectional approach to tackling inequalities - or falling short of doing so.

We asked participants about their lives under lockdown, their experiences of accessing public services and social support in Scotland, and their hopes for the future. A brief description of each participant is provided below. Descriptors are broad to maintain anonymity. All names are pseudonyms.

Holly is retired and lives alone. She has multiple chronic health conditions and is an active volunteer.

Ash has been in Scotland for over a decade and is seeking asylum. He is also studying at college part-time and is an active volunteer. He lives alone.

Fern works part time and is a lone parent. She has lived in Scotland for around a decade and lives with her young son.

Sequoia is seeking asylum. She lives alone and has chronic health conditions.

Rowan is a young woman seeking asylum. She is studying at college part-time, and lives with her mother and younger siblings.

Accessing public services

In our conversations we heard about various barriers to accessing public services. Sometimes these were specific to particular services, but most often they were linked to a lack of appropriate information, to overt discrimination, or to more subtle means of disempowerment.

Housing

Both Ash and Sequoia had experienced street homelessness and destitution not long after arriving in Scotland. Sequoia described how when she arrived in Scotland she was in temporary accommodation for a number of weeks, but when her money ran out she became destitute. She felt this would have been entirely preventable if she had known what support she was entitled to as someone seeking asylum.

“If [I] had had access to the information I have now, I wouldn’t have been street homeless” Sequoia

Fern had been homeless briefly with her young son. She was able to stay with friends and apply independently for social housing. She did not present herself as homeless to her local authority when she applied for social housing herself, and felt this had enabled her to access secure housing more quickly than friends who had. She bid for various social housing properties and was eventually successful after a number of years. She had some problems with her current housing, and had re-applied to be moved, which involved lots of pages of questions and physical forms, which she felt could be online.

“It gives you security. It’s very important for single parents. Because I just have a case of my friend who was basically told by a landlord that she has to move.” Fern

Fern talked about the system for bidding for social housing in her area, and the challenges for new users. She felt there needed to be efforts made to upgrade the system for people relying on a mobile phone, perhaps through an app that was designed to be more user friendly. She described the extensive application form she had to fill out when trying to reapply for social housing after experiencing some problems with neighbours in her current flat. She felt it was *“a bit excessive”* and that people from her community had difficulty filling it in. She felt it would be easier to have the option to do it online. She had just been offered a new flat after looking for a long time, but was feeling apprehensive about moving.

Despite these barriers, Fern felt that being able to access social housing had been crucial to building security for herself and her son:

“When I became single I wasn’t stressed about being a single parent. It’s not about heavily relying on the state, it’s about knowing I won’t be left with nothing and I will be able to provide for my son being a single parent. So it gives me piece of mind always.” Fern on social housing

Fern also had experience of the private rented sector, where she had been keenly aware of ‘No DSS’ policies informally or formally enacted by private landlords. She spoke of her relief in finding a private landlord who would not discriminate against her as a tenant in receipt of housing benefit. We also heard of racist and xenophobic attitudes displayed by housing officers in asylum accommodation:

“When the housing officer came to the house, sometimes they were using language that I’m not feeling so comfortable to hear. Sometimes they say, “Why are you here?” “Why don’t you go back to your country?”” Ash

Health and care

When done badly, however, face to face services can present additional barriers and enable discrimination. Sequoia became seriously unwell after experiencing a period of street homeless. She was in hospital for two months, but only had access to an interpreter when

she was asked to consent to an emergency procedure. She had been repeatedly addressed as 'Mister' when accessing health services, despite repeatedly explaining that she identifies as a woman, and that being clear from her ID and other documents. She was put on a male ward, where she did not feel safe.

"Here [I feel] the transphobia is very obvious and in your face, [I] will go [...] and they will be referring to [me] as a Mister and [I] will be like no that's not correct, [I] will correct them when [I'm] being misgendered and they will still do it." Sequoia

She had been trying to access specialist services, including a gender identity clinic, but it had been a very difficult process through which doctors *"kept putting barrier after barrier in front of me"*.

Holly was worried about heightened barriers to accessing care during lockdown. She had had to push more to access care she needed but was concerned that nothing was quite the same as face to face services. While Holly was confident in pushing for the care she needed, she felt other older people were not and often felt services *'might not be for me'*. She was used to relying on herself, and had found it difficult to ask for help when she became unwell. She described the difficulty some older people have in accessing the services they need, that was sometimes driven by stigma or disempowerment.

*"I'm not frightened to ask – but others are... they feel they're giving up something"
"I used to do everything on my own. It's a lot to give up" Holly*

Holly was concerned that elderly health and social care service users frequently turn down services or minimise problems out of a sense that they don't want to be a 'burden' either on their families and friends or on the healthcare system, which they are already likely to be in more frequent contact with.

A separate but related point was that face to face services, when delivered well, offer greater opportunities to treat people with dignity and respect. Holly talked about the role face to face services play in creating an environment where people can express their needs and expect to be treated with respect, and the challenge of asking for access to services or other support:

*"There's nothing like face to face"
"I didn't realise at all that I needed help until the shit hit the fan. You have to swallow your pride, it's like calling the electric company" Holly*

Understanding how people's understanding of themselves and their social position is key to identifying the barriers that hold people from accessing services they stand to benefit from. Tackling inequalities in access to vital services and support – be it health and care services, or social security – is key to unlocking improved outcomes for disadvantaged groups. It was clear from our conversations that, when done well, face to face services that allow space and time to build trust and relationships have transformative potential. Where that space and trust is not prioritised, however, existing inequalities can be exacerbated.

We heard how formal and informal barriers to accessing public services were often intertwined with direct discrimination, or disempowering systems. Participants' faced practical barriers – in the form of language barriers, a lack of access to information, or complicated routes to accessing services or support – that often interacted with overt discrimination enacted by individuals and enabled by the systems they were part of. These particular overlapping barriers meant that Fern, Holly, Ash and Sequoia had additional obstacles to accessing essential services, or were not able to access them at all. This resulted in harm to their safety, security, health and wellbeing.

Language barriers

Language barriers were a specific and persistent challenge for participants. A lack of routes through which to access public services had created additional barriers for participants as they tried to access housing, healthcare and other basic services.

For Ash and Sequoia, a language barrier was a key factor that led to their experiences of destitution. Both felt that having access to more information at an earlier stage, and particularly shortly after they arrived in Scotland, could have prevented them from ending up destitute. They had both been put in touch with voluntary organisations through friends or authorities while destitute, and these organisations had supported them to access food and shelter, make housing applications, and provided support in their asylum claims. Ash and Sequoia both described how a language barrier meant they were unable to access important information about what support was available to them, and to communicate their needs.

“If you look at a person like me... you arrive into the country with a [language] barrier, you have been working so hard, you have connected with the society, and at the end of the day you’ve been abandoned. It is very sad. I don’t have any power to turn it around.” Ash

Both Ash and Sequoia had limited access to interpreters when trying to access public services or support. Sequoia was managing multiple health conditions and was sometimes, but not always, able to access an interpreter to facilitate GP appointments. When she went to pick up her prescription, however, there was no support to overcome the language barrier, which made things difficult. Ash explained that he had been even more motivated to learn English as a result of the frustration of communicating through interpreters, who he perceived did not often fully capture what he was trying to say:

“Sometimes we are facing more problems because of the translator. Because if I can speak in my own, you can hear me clearly. But sometimes the translator is translating according to his understanding. Sometimes it’s not the way I say.” Ash

Ash had gone on to teach himself English over the last decade. He had made use of classes available through local churches and was now studying at college in English. Sequoia had not been able to access any courses that suited her access needs, and she was struggling to make progress with her English while feeling increasingly isolated. She felt that a language barrier was her greatest obstacle, and that a transgender person who was English-speaking

would have been treated differently to how she has been treated when trying to access services and support.

“Someone who is trans and Scottish, or trans and British, or trans and speaks English wouldn’t have been treated in the way [I] have been.” Sequoia

Fern described her attempts to apply for a job within Scottish Government, which had actively encouraged applications from people from ethnic minority backgrounds. She was told her application could not proceed if it did not meet the criteria of ‘National 5 level or equivalent’ qualification in English. Her HND-level qualifications obtained in English were not accepted as sufficient evidence, which she found very frustrating. She felt her accent and the fact that she had obtained her degree overseas held her back from achieving her potential in work.

“I will always stick out for the reason of my accent.”
“English is kind of like my Achilles’ heel” Fern

Fern still felt a language barrier was her greatest challenge in securing good quality work on which she and her child could rely.

Language barriers posed practical obstacles where interpreters were not available to make services accessible, or where information on services was not available in the first place. They also linked into wider challenges in accessing services and support as new and settled migrants in Scotland, linking to intensified isolation and inequality in the labour market.

Digital access

Digital poverty shaped the experiences of people we spoke with, often intensifying isolation or presenting a barrier to participating in education or community life. Access to computers, tablets and reliable internet was a key priority and a persistent challenge for people living on low incomes.

For Rowan, a lack of reliable internet access or a computer or tablet device at home meant she was unable to continue with her college studies during lockdown. For her, the closure of colleges and libraries had cut off her ability to pursue her education almost entirely, and she worried about falling behind her classmates.

“I was angry and upset because if we resume [college] now...there’s no way I’m going to [be able to] do my homework”
“They’ve got access to technology to do things, but I don’t” Rowan

Having informal community support networks cut off during lockdown also intensified the barriers she faced as a young person living on a very limited income during lockdown, meaning she was unable to go to a friend’s house to access the internet, study or complete college assignments. Her caring responsibilities for her younger siblings created additional challenges as she did not have her own space to study while schools and nurseries were closed.

Intersectionality: revealing the realities of poverty and inequality in Scotland

With her family unable to afford internet access at home, Rowan was reliant on a voluntary organisation who were providing her and her family with top-ups to her mobile phone data. The family were reliant on a smart phone to access the internet, and phone top-ups paid for by a voluntary sector organisation.

During lockdown, everything online had to be done through her phone. She was using her mobile data to stay connected to community groups who were helping her and her family access food, and helping her to do some home schooling with her younger siblings and enabling her to stream cartoons to keep them occupied.

“It’s been difficult because they get bored” Rowan on caring for her younger sisters during lockdown

Rowan and her family’s lack of access to a computer or tablet clearly limited their ability to learn from home and to stay connected to the outside world, including through school, college and their community. In June, she was relying on mobile phone data to try to teach her younger sibling from home. Her younger sister had not been able to access any lessons and the family had not had any contact with her teacher since the start of lockdown.

Rowan was unable to continue with her college courses while lockdown persisted, without access to a laptop or books. With libraries closed and social distancing measures in place, she felt frustrated that she was cut off from education without access to libraries where she would usually go to study and get books, or to her friends’ house where she could do homework and could get online. She had found the last month of lockdown very difficult.

For Holly, a tablet provided a lifeline to community during lockdown. She described her frustration at a policy approach that had recognised the (legitimate) digital needs of young people in order to access education from home, but not of older people who can be entirely cut off from vital networks without access to face-to-face services, or support to get online through libraries or informal support networks of friends and family. She was frustrated that her local authority had done nothing to support her during lockdown, despite being aware she is elderly and lives alone.

“Nobody considers people like us” Holly

For Ash, phone credit top-ups provided by voluntary organisations had enabled him to stay in touch with friends, community organisations he belongs to, and his lawyers.

Digital access or lack of it alleviated or intensified some of the challenges associated with poverty – such as loneliness and isolation – and created new ones where it presented a barrier to education, participation in community life, or maintaining relationships. Our conversations, and the backdrop of lockdown, underscored the importance of digital access to full participation in society, and its role as a basic necessity.

Reliability of social security

For Fern, the social security system had presented more barriers to financial security, where it should have provided a safety net to fall back on. When an administrative error had disrupted the social security payment she relied on, she had been pushed her into a more precarious financial position.

Fern used to receive tax benefits, and had more recently applied for Universal Credit, but had her application affected by a payroll error¹ that saw her pay counted twice in a single assessment period, and her benefit reduced to 10% of her normal payment as a result. Fern could find no information about her right to appeal online, and relied on advice organisations for support.

“I never knew exactly why people associate Universal Credit with poverty, or they say ‘it put me into further poverty’, but now I know why.” Fern

Fern felt there needed to be more information for Universal Credit applicants on how the process would work, and how the assessment period would be calculated. She described how her trust in the social security system had been eroded by her experience, as while her tax credits operated *“like a clock”*, she could not rely on Universal Credit payments. She felt it was crucial that there was better and clearer guidance up front about how the assessment period works in relation to when your wage or salary comes in, and that *‘it should be really well explained’* before you submit a claim.

“I don’t know what’s going to happen this month [...] I lost belief totally.”

“People need to know how crucial the application date is” Fern

While her appeal was eventually successful, her lower payment had coincided with notice that she had to repay HMRC for overpaying tax credits, which she had continued to receive in error after switching to Universal Credit. This debt alongside her underpayment of UC had left her in rent arrears.

“I have to pay £200 to HMRC, they’re going to recover this from my Universal Credit, I have to repay [my] Advance Payment, and now [because of] this period where I was penalised... I am very heavily behind with my rent with my current housing association.” Fern

While Fern had appealed her outcome and sought out support to appeal, she felt that others in her position – and particularly other lone parents with English as a second language – would not always have the understanding, the capacity, or the strength to appeal against similar outcomes. Friends of hers who are also single mothers had been left in similar situations, but some had decided *‘just to live with it’*. She also felt that there should be clearer signposting of claimants’ right to appeal a decision taken by DWP.

¹ In a case similar to that detailed in [Child Poverty Action Group’s successful High Court case](#)

Fern felt that her position as a lone parent with English as a second language had made her experience with the benefits system all the more difficult, as she faced multiple and often overlapping barriers in pursuing her appeal. Most significant were the demands on her time as a working lone parent, and the additional difficulty of navigating the DWP appeals process in a second language. She had felt disempowered by the system to such an extent that she lost trust in its ability to provide for her and her son – layering greater insecurity onto their already precarious position.

No Recourse to Public Funds status

One of the key issues that came up unprompted through our interviews with experts by experience was in relation to people with unresolved immigration status, commonly referred to as having ‘No Recourse to Public Funds’ (NRPF). NRPF bars some people from non-EEA countries (at least until after Brexit) with certain immigration statuses from accessing services and entitlements paid for by public funds, with some people and families instead provided with a subsistence payment. Three of our participants – Ash, Rowan and Sequoia – have NRPF status. They described their experience and the interaction of this with other aspects of poverty.

Ash and Sequoia had eventually accessed housing through the Home Office after experiencing destitution and street homelessness. Rowan and her family were housed on account of her younger siblings.

Each described the sense of powerlessness generated by the system. Ash and Sequoia talked about having to regularly report to the Home Office, and how they felt there was a lack of care and basic respect by officials. Ash explained that if you were seen to have a nice shirt or a nice dress or nice shoes, you were treated with suspicion, as if somebody seeking asylum should not be able to take pride in their appearance. He felt this conveyed an assumption that people seeking asylum should not be able to have nice things – even when in reality these clothes often supplied by charities.

“What can I say? Because that is the situation we’re facing, we don’t have a choice. You are in the cage. You don’t have any power to come out from the cage [...] We’re not given the responsibility to look after ourselves.” Ash

Sequoia explained that when you go to sign in, officials do not check if you have access to food, housing, or health services, or if you are at risk of destitution. She had not been signposted to help she had later learned she was entitled to, and information was often not available in any language other than English. She had only been able to access government support with the help of a voluntary organisation.

A contributory factor for the people we spoke with that had NRPF status was the incredibly low level of financial support offered by government. Their status as asylum seekers means Ash, Rowan and Sequoia are barred from taking on paid work and unable to access social security support. In addition, they have restricted access to public services including housing support. Managing financially on around £5 a day was very difficult, and meant every day brought choices between buying food or paying for public transport.

“How are you supposed to live on £35 [a week]? [...] You have no options to do anything else with your life. You have nowhere to go, nothing to do, besides waiting.”
Sequoia

The sense of powerlessness had often grown to become a sense of hopelessness for the future. Alongside a bar on taking on paid work and limited access to education, this presented a further set of restrictions on top of cultural and language barriers that led to social isolation. For Sequoia, life without settled status had left her hopes for the future suspended as she struggled to do more than survive:

“Life without documents is completely another life. It is very horrible to be in this situation for years, with my whole life stopped and paralysed, without being able to do all the things I dreamed of.” Sequoia

Their status as asylum seekers and its specific interactions with additional restrictions Ash, Rowan and Sequoia faced created particular experiences of poverty, and particular overlapping barriers. With both access to paid work and public services out of reach, they were pushed into a position of powerlessness than in some instances had quickly descended into hopelessness. Their experiences demonstrate how far systems of exclusion can reinforce barriers and limit people’s prospects. It also reinforces the wider impact these systems have on the day-to-day lives and wellbeing of the people they affect.

Food insecurity

We heard that food insecurity was a persistent challenge for participants which, for some, was exacerbated during lockdown. This was related to the very low incomes Rowan, Ash and Sequoia were living on, but it also interacted with other barriers in how they could spend the limited funds they had, and difficulties in accessing appropriate food.

For Rowan, the challenge of finding food that her family were familiar with and could afford was intensified during lockdown. She and her family rely on an ASPEN card provided by the Home Office, but that card can only be spent in shops and does not allow them to make purchases online. This caused particular challenges during lockdown as the family were not able to shop online, and Rowan or her mother would have to travel by bus during the peak of the pandemic to buy food, often having to visit multiple supermarkets. This pushed Rowan and her family into greater food insecurity, presenting additional risks to their health.

“There is certain food that we eat. Sometimes we go there [to the shop] and we don’t see that food in the shop. So we have to go to another shop to get it” Rowan

Rowan explained that the food her family eats has become more expensive in recent months and is often in short supply. This had forced her to travel further than usual, and her family had relied on food provided at their local community centre to get by. Rowan and her mother had alternated taking trips out to get food during lockdown, while the other cared for her younger siblings. Rowan expected things to get more difficult over the coming

months. Ash explained that the food provided in temporary accommodation for people seeking asylum was often not appropriate for cultural or religious needs, which created significant difficulties.

Ash described the lack of government support for people seeking asylum during the pandemic, and the vital role charities and voluntary organisations had played: *“without them, I don’t know how we would cope”*.

For Sequoia, lockdown had given her greater food security as she received food packages as a result of being on the Scottish Government’s shielding list. She had been less worried about food but had been struggling with isolation.

Ash, Rowan and Sequoia’s experiences of food insecurity were driven by a multitude of overlapping barriers: from very stretched budgets, to particular challenges in accessing appropriate food, to the additional challenges posed by the pandemic. Accessing basic food was a continued struggle for participants. Sequoia’s experience of being included on the Scottish Government’s shielding list for food support was a clear example of how public provision, when done well, could lower significant barriers.

Barriers to employment and hopes for the future

Fern, Rowan, Ash and Sequoia all faced barriers to getting into, or getting on in work. For Fern, particular barriers had held her back from progressing in work. For Rowan, Ash, and Sequoia, their immigration status left them unable to work.

Fern currently works part-time but is underemployed and over-qualified for her current job. Now that her son is in senior school, she is looking to return to working full time, but has struggled to get the kind of work she wants. She has sought out various employability services to help her get on in work, but feels she faces an uphill battle to get on in work and fulfil her potential, and to have her degree, which she obtained before she moved to Scotland, taken seriously:

“I feel I have a lot of potential, but I don’t want to go for any job [...] I’d like to still be able to progress, career-wise”

“I always will feel that someone who is native and has degree, fluent English, will be favoured over me. I don’t want to say that’s the way it works, but that’s my mindset.” Fern

She is now enrolled in a specialist service for lone parents, and is feeling more positive about the future. She felt she was able to trust her advisor, that the service was reliable, and that she was understood:

‘You can feel the personal touch. [My employability advisor] is very thoughtful, and I don’t feel it’s just a job for her. She’s not like a ticking boxes exercise, she’s very, kind of, involved, and very [...] caring about her service users.’ Fern

Ash, Rowan and Sequoia are all unable to take on paid employment while their asylum claims remain unresolved. Ash and Sequoia described how difficult it was to feel like life was suspended while unresolved immigration status restricted their options so severely. Ash and Rowan were frustrated at the limitations imposed on their opportunity to take college courses and work towards vocational qualifications. Both felt that education was key to unlocking their futures, but work was also a central part of their hopes for a more settled life in Scotland. Without leave to remain, opportunities to build security or to invest in their futures were limited.

“Living for [many] years in limbo, you are not allowed to work, you are not allowed to do anything. As a human being, sometimes I see all my dreams floating away. I don’t have any power to turn it around” Ash

Ash volunteers as a befriender for the elderly and is passionate about caring for older people. He dreams of becoming a qualified care worker. For Rowan, leave to remain would enable her to study full time and follow her dream of going to university to become a nurse.

For Fern, Rowan, Ash and Sequoia, being underemployed or facing a bar on any employment affected their lives and options in a material sense, but it also affected how they felt about themselves and their futures. Each faced particular barriers that they felt held them back from realising their potential, from feeling like they were able to make a valuable contribution, or from looking forward to the future.

Capability and community

Several participants stressed their relative advantage compared to others they knew who were or had been in situations similar to their own. For Holly, Ash and Fern, this was linked to their experience in advocating for themselves and their needs, and the roles they played in their own communities supporting others to access services and support. Some spoke of the transformative capability they gained through improving their English, meaning they could speak directly for themselves and seek out sources of help and support more effectively. Others spoke about how knowledge and familiarity with the NHS or the social security system had provided them with insights into how pushing, particularly when support is initially refused, can make a big difference to outcomes.

“I’ve had to push things... by getting help you gain that bit of independence”

“I’m quite bolshie, but not everyone picks up and keeps calling on the phone” Holly

Holly described how integral networks of family and friends are to supporting isolated people to claim social security or care services for which they were eligible. Fern described supporting members of her community and other single parents to know what support they were eligible for, and how to navigate a frequently confounding social security system. Ash described how speaking out about his own experience had given other people in community a voice. For each of them, community networks were vital sources of information and support.

“Some people are too shy to ask for it because they don’t want to be a burden to someone”

Fern

They each described how a lack of information had stopped others in similar positions to their own from coming forward for support, and how lack of information about what support is available and a lack of encouragement and support often meant others missed out. These insights highlight the importance of informal and formal community networks in connecting people to services and support – particularly where they were facing specific barriers. Without these networks, several participants felt they would not have been able to access vital support. Further, some participants felt they would not have been able to access services had they not been in a position where they could effectively advocate for themselves and their needs. This underlined the importance of person-centred services that build trust and relationships with service users in order to ensure people experiencing multiple barriers are not excluded.

Shifting power: ideas for change

“If they treat us with dignity, with respect – that will cover everything” Ash

We also spoke about what might have made a difference to participants’ experiences of accessing services and support. Each participant we spoke with felt that approaches that were underpinned by a better understanding of their lives and experiences and the particular barriers they were facing would begin to improve things.

For Ash, a fundamental lack of recognition of the humanity of refugees and people seeking asylum, and of an understanding of their lives, needs to be addressed. He wanted to be seen as a human being, and treated with dignity and respect. That meant being able to access education, to work, and to build a life in Scotland that would enable him and others in his community to play their full part in society, and to *‘give back to the community’*.

For Holly, being listened to was key. She wanted to see more of a focus on tackling isolation among older people, including by *‘picking up the phone’* and through government efforts to support older people to access digital devices like smart phones and tablets. Holly was also concerned that because she lived in a *‘good area’* there was an impression that she didn’t need support, and that older people living alone were too often falling through the cracks unless they pushed hard for the support they needed, and had the confidence and resources to do so.

For Rowan, imagining a future was very difficult while she was living with so much uncertainty at a young age. She felt that access to a laptop and the internet, and the option to progress onto university would enable her to pursue her education and fulfil her dreams of becoming a nurse.

Sequoia felt there needed to be a more diverse workforce that includes trans people so that no one else has to experience what she has been through. She felt that if people providing services and making decisions understood something of her experience, things would be very different.

Intersectionality: revealing the realities of poverty and inequality in Scotland

For Fern, government needs to change to better reflect the communities it serves.

“In my opinion it is all about connecting with communities [...] I don’t feel there is enough diversity in decision making.” Fern talked the value of diversity not just in parliament – but across Scottish Government. For her, only when more people shaping policy and making decisions from within government. She wants to see a move away from ‘empty slogans’ towards action:

“The policymakers should reflect the community. Only then will it actually make sense” Fern

Representation and access to decision making were clear themes across our conversations. When policy or approaches to service provision failed those at the intersection of multiple forms of inequality, it was often linked to a lack of recognition of the particular barriers different people faced. This lack of understanding was isolating and disempowering, as people were left to feel they were fighting their own battles, often without effective or appropriate support.

Chapter 4: Intersectionality across Scottish Government policy agendas

“You can look at the Race Equality framework for Scotland, the Fair Work framework for Scotland – all of them talk about people as one. And what that does is it assumes that poverty affects everyone the same way, that racism affects everyone the same way, that sexism affects everyone the same way. And as a consequence, it means that any policy intervention is going to be less competent for those who feel it [inequality] most sharply.

“What intersectionality allows you to do – what intersectional analysis allow you to do – is to think about the person furthest away from access to opportunity, how the particular policy or strategy is going to impact them, and then work from there, as opposed to what a lot of policy does, which is often the lowest hanging fruit... It takes a ‘one size fits all’ approach, which means a lot of people will be left behind.”

Participant, third sector

Through this research, we interviewed policymakers working to reduce inequality in Scotland. Participants worked across policy and practice, and had expertise in intersecting inequalities. We discussed how participants understood intersectionality, how different experiences of inequality in Scotland are understood, and what needs to change in order to better recognise and respond to the reality of how inequality shapes people’s lives, and our society.

In this chapter, we explore major cross-cutting policy agendas aimed at reducing poverty and inequality in Scotland to determine how far they recognise or address multiple or overlapping barriers, and to look for evidence of intersectional approaches to analysing problems and designing solutions. The policy areas discussed in this chapter reflect the areas identified by participants or by existing research as having particular strengths or shortcomings. While evidence of an intersectional approach is clearly lacking across major policy areas, we identify some areas of work to build on.

Child poverty

Child poverty has been a major policy focus in Scotland over the last parliamentary last term. In 2017 the Scottish Parliament unanimously passed the *Child Poverty (Scotland) Act*. This places an obligation on the Scottish Government to meet four demanding and legally binding targets to reduce both absolute and relative child poverty by 2030, with interim targets set for 2021. To meet these ambitious targets, the Scottish Government has outlined plans to address three key drivers of child poverty: income from employment, income from social security and benefits in kind, and costs of living (Scottish Government 2018b). The Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan, published in 2018, outlines actions against each of these areas, alongside action on additional cross-cutting issues including parental employment, mental health, and transport strategy. Here, there are clear opportunities to take intersectional approaches to developing policy solutions, and to monitoring and evaluating outcomes for different groups.

In Scotland, anti-poverty policy and economic strategy have begun to attempt to understand the role multiple social factors play in driving inequality and disadvantage. This is an important first step. The Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan published in 2018

identified ‘priority families’ at high risk over poverty, recognising the structural factors that we know can increase families’ likelihood of experiencing poverty. Where the strategy stops at single-dimensional analysis, though, an intersectional analysis would seek to shed light on where these identities and social positions overlap, either with one another or with other factors, and on what that means for a families’ experience of and exposure to poverty.

The Tackling Child Poverty Action plan was widely recognised as ‘a step in the right direction’ by the policy practitioners we spoke to in this research, in that it recognises the role of a number of factors that might put families with children at greater risk of poverty. The strategy was described as ‘*pretty well gendered*’ in a way that is not evident systemically across government in Scotland. This was repeatedly attributed to the work of a number of advocacy organisations and the gender competence of particular staff within Scottish Government who had worked on the strategy.

The strategy sets out six types of ‘priority families’ at higher risk of poverty: lone parents, families with a disabled adult or child, young mothers, minority ethnic families, families with a child under the age of one, and larger families (with three or more children). This moves towards an understanding of poverty in the context of wider social and economic inequalities: widening our field of vision to incorporate how gender dynamics, racial inequalities, particular barriers facing disabled parents and/or parents of disabled children, and the distribution of unpaid care shape experiences of poverty across Scotland.

The Action Plan also details policy responses responding to specific challenges faced by particular families or groups. This includes action on tailored learning support for Gypsy/traveller families, a range of measures aimed at supporting disabled children and their families, and steps to reduce the negative impacts of parental imprisonment. Action on parental employment, including the Parental Employment Support Fund and the associated Disabled Parents Employment Support fund are examples of where an understanding of the multiple, often overlapping barriers facing parents in Scotland is key to preventing poverty and providing sustainable routes out of poverty for families with children. Collecting and analysing intersectional data on key indicators should be central to policy monitoring and evaluation over the coming years.

Fair Work

The past four years have seen a persistent policy focus on in-work poverty and disadvantage in Scotland’s labour market. We have seen the establishment of Scotland’s Fair Work Commission, investment to support expanding available subsidised hours in early learning and childcare, action on gender pay gaps, and new services devolved to Scotland to support those furthest away from the labour market to get back into work.

We found evidence of significant progress on policy and strategy – most notably through the 2019 Gender Pay Gap Action Plan. There remains a risk, however, that work to tackle the full range of inequalities in Scotland’s labour market – including intersecting inequalities – is reserved for this Action Plan, where an intersectional approach is needed across policymaking.

Existing research highlights intersecting inequalities at the heart of minority ethnic workers' ongoing labour market inequality. Across the UK, the labour force participation gap between white and minority ethnic workers, for example, is largely driven by the gap between white and ethnic-minority women, who have labour force participation rates of 76 and 62 per cent respectively (Allas et al. 2020). While progress has been made on labour force participation for women across all ethnic groups from 2004-2018, substantial inequalities persist relative to men (ibid). Data at the Scotland level shows substantial and persistent pay gaps along lines of ethnicity, gender and nationality – and that pay gaps are exacerbated where these factors interact for minority ethnic workers, working women, and workers born outside the UK. ONS statistics show that the ethnicity pay gap in Scotland in 2019 was 10.3%, meaning that ethnic minority workers earn, on average, 10.3% less than white workers. This constitutes the third largest ethnicity pay gap of any UK nation or region, behind just London and Yorkshire and the Humber (ONS 2020). We know that ethnicity pay gaps in Scotland are largest for Black and Asian workers, and that these pay gaps also interact with country of birth: both Black and Asian workers born outside of Scotland experience a relatively higher pay gap as compared with white workers born in the UK (ONS 2020, Figure 13).

Close the Gap research lays clear the intertwined gendered and racialised barriers to accessing, staying in, and progressing in paid work in the Scotland (Close the Gap 2019). They find that three quarters of Black and minority ethnic women in Scotland have experienced some form of racism, discrimination, racial prejudice or bias in the workplace, with over half reporting that they had been overlooked for promotion as a result of racism. Further research published by Equate has explored multiple discriminations experienced by women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) sectors, by looking at the distinct experiences of minority ethnic women, disabled women, LGBT women and women with caring responsibilities (Equate 2020). The report found that 60 per cent of women working in STEM surveyed had experienced sexism in the workplace or in an educational setting, with 1 in 3 of these having also experienced ageism, and 1 in 6 having experienced discrimination related to caring responsibilities or maternity.

The Scottish Government's 2019 Gender Pay Gap Action Plan is founded on the explicit objective of reducing the pay gap for employees in Scotland and 'to tackle the labour market inequalities faced by women, particularly disabled women, older women, minority ethnic women, women from poorer socio-economic backgrounds and women with caring responsibilities.' This was widely welcomed by policy practitioners we spoke with, who described the Action Plan as an example of progress towards an intersectional approach to tackling inequalities. The Gender Pay Gap Action Plan was praised for its cross-cutting nature, and for the recognition that action on the gender pay gap necessarily spans a variety of policy domains.

There is no specific action in relation to either mental health or racial inequalities detailed in the Scottish Government's Fair Work Action Plan despite evidence of the relationship between mental ill health and poorer outcomes in the labour market (Mental Health Foundation 2016), and evidence that Black and ethnic minority workers experience persistent discrimination in Scotland's labour market (Meer et al. 2020; Scottish Government 2020). Research from Carnegie UK and Operation Black Vote has underlined

the need for an intersectional approach to promoting good work by exploring the links between precarious work, mental health and ethnicity experienced by young workers (White 2020).

There is evidently much more work to be done to embed and understanding of intersecting inequalities in Scotland's labour market across government. One participant described the Fair Work Commission as an example of the shortcomings of policymaking without an intersectional approach:

The fair work commission and the fair work strategy is a really good example of that: it doesn't have a gendered lens to it, it doesn't have a race equality lens to it. And as a consequence, it is not fit for purpose when we know that Black and minority ethnic women have a significantly higher pay gap than white women, or than, for example, Black men. It [an intersectional approach] gives you a nuanced understanding of peoples' lives and how policy interacts with [them]. Participant, third sector

As Covid-19 and the resulting economic crisis pose new risks to the earnings and employment of families across Scotland, efforts to tackle child poverty must be redoubled. As we come to better understand who is most exposed to the economic fallout from the pandemic, an intersectional analysis will be crucial to designing a policy approach that meets families' immediate needs in the months ahead, and narrows inequalities through the recovery that follows. In particular, early indicators of women (and particularly mothers), young people and particular ethnic minority groups' disproportionate exposure to job loss and/or unemployment will need to be closely monitored and met with tailored responses through recovery plans.

Housing

Housing costs remain a key factor driving poverty in Scotland. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation's *Poverty in Scotland 2020* report underlines the importance of reducing housing costs in solving poverty in Scotland, and the role housing costs play is clear in comparing rates of relative poverty re- and post-housing costs. It's also clear that intersecting inequalities affect access to affordable housing in Scotland. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation recommend that the Scottish Government evaluate investment in housing for its impact on child poverty and on supporting equality groups (JRF 2020).

Independent Poverty Advisor Naomi Eisenstadt's 2017 report to the Scottish Government also placed a focus on affordable housing as a cross-cutting issue driving poverty in Scotland (Eisenstadt 2017). There are clear dimensions by which particular demographic groups in Scotland are likely to experience multiple barriers to accessing affordable housing. It is long-established that minority ethnic groups in Scotland are less likely to access social housing and are over-represented in private rented housing (Netto et al. 2011). We also know that in 2013 ethnic minority households were four times more likely than white households to live in overcrowded housing, and that people from an ethnic minority background in Scotland were twice as likely to live in poverty as 'White-British' people (Equality and Human Rights Commission 2016).

Intersectionality: revealing the realities of poverty and inequality in Scotland

Recent research by Scotland's Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights has highlighted the need to take an intersectional approach to investigating Black and minority ethnic people's experiences of the Scottish homelessness system. The research urges a specific focus on the high instances of women from Asian, Scottish Asian or British Asian backgrounds making homelessness applications resulting from instances of domestic abuse (CRER 2020). This research underscores the need to apply an intersectional approach to understanding major drivers of poverty – including affordable housing – by understanding the role of multiple and often interacting systems of oppression.

A 2018 report from the Equality and Human Rights Commission highlights a 'hidden crisis' in housing for disabled people in Scotland, and a 'severe shortage' of accessible homes across all tenure types (Equality and Human Rights Commission 2018). The report finds that systems in place at the local authority level to assess disabled peoples' housing requirements are weak, and that decisions made about current and future housing need are based on 'poor' data. Accessible housing shortages were particularly acute in the social housing sector.

Through this research, we also heard concerns about a shortage of three-bedroom houses in the social housing sector in some parts of Scotland, particularly affecting families with children and larger families. 2019 research from Public Health Scotland into the particular challenges facing larger families (with three or more children) highlighted housing costs as a leading factor pushing up the cost of living for larger families, putting them at greater risk of poverty (Public Health Scotland 2019).

Taken together, this recent evidence points to multiple enduring barriers to accessing appropriate and affordable housing in Scotland, which is likely to sustain and exacerbate the challenges facing people living in poverty. Further research exploring the particular challenges facing people in Scotland experiencing multiple barriers to accessing appropriate and affordable housing would be welcome, alongside a sustained focus on lowering barriers for people from ethnic minority backgrounds, disabled people, and larger families.

Economic policy approaches

An intersectional analysis recognises how different dimensions of inequality are interlinked. This means an intersectional lens can offer new ways of thinking about poverty and economic inequality, by understanding how they are both a cause and a consequence of other dimensions of inequality, such as race, gender, disability, and migration status. The adoption of inclusive growth as a pillar of Scotland's revised Economic Strategy in 2015 has put a sharper focus on economic inequality – and particularly income inequality – in the Scottish Government's approach to economic policymaking over the last parliament. Scottish Government defines inclusive growth as:

'Growth that combines increased prosperity with greater equity; that creates opportunities for all and distributes the dividends of increased prosperity fairly.'
Scottish Government 2015

The Scottish Government's inclusive growth agenda and more recent focus on a Wellbeing Economy have taken steps towards recognising that economic and social power are not evenly distributed across Scotland, or across Scotland's population. This signalled a promising shift towards understanding how Scotland's economic model shapes and sustains inequalities. It recognises that inequality both harms people in Scotland and the health of our economy, and argues for an approach to economic development in Scotland that prioritises inclusion, and looks to address the distribution of income and wealth across Scotland by design, not as an afterthought or by redistributive measures (such as tax and spend) alone.

Policymaking aimed at delivering inclusive growth has focussed on 'promoting fair work and good quality jobs', 'promoting equality and tackling inequality', 'closing the attainment gap' and on 'place and regional cohesion' (Scottish Government 2020). Since the adoption of inclusive growth as a pillar of the Scottish Government's economic strategy, and more recently the wellbeing agenda, narrowing inequality has been a clear, cross-cutting objective for economic policymakers in Scotland.

However, progress towards making inclusive growth a reality for communities across the country has been less forthcoming (Statham and Gunson 2019). Delivering inclusive growth, which aims to narrow inequalities whilst strengthening economic performance, demands an understanding of which people and which places are sharing in Scotland's growth, as well as who is being left behind (Statham and Gunson, 2019). As previous IPPR Scotland research with the Poverty and Inequality Commission has found, interventions and measures of progress within the inclusive growth agenda too often took a single-axis approach to understanding and tackling inequalities, risking an ineffective tick-box approach.

For some, this was seen to have facilitated a shift away from more closely focussed equality agendas:

"What we've seen from policymakers is a move away from the language of equality to talk more generically about inequality, which is essentially a catch-all for income inequality without a recognition that people's experience of income inequality is entirely driven by their identities, and their experiences within that." Participant

At the local level, the inclusive growth agenda has sought to shine a light on groups that are marginalised or excluded from sharing in the gains of economic growth, or from fully participating in local economies. One of the tools implemented by the Scottish Government to help to translate inclusive growth in theory to practice is the inclusive growth diagnostic tool. The diagnostic tool seeks to support local level policymakers to identify and prioritise marginalised groups and design policy solutions to support greater economic inclusion. Piloted in North Ayrshire, the tool helps local policymakers to produce a list of priority groups – such as women, Black and minority ethnic communities, disabled people, and people experiencing mental ill-health. However, in practice the tool has been used to prioritise many potential population groups which, taken together, constitute a substantial majority of a local population (Statham and Gunson 2019).

Recent work on delivering inclusive growth in Scotland has identified the challenge of people-based approaches to inclusive growth that risk promising all things to all people, and local processes that have generated considerable confusion where the economic dimensions of the inequality experienced by particular population groups is not well understood.

While a localised approach to developing policy solutions is welcome, we are yet to see robust evidence of solutions designed to meet the needs of particular marginalised groups, in their local contexts, tried and tested in action. Criticism of the Inclusive Growth Diagnostic tool has been sharpest in regard to its limited focus on *how* to design policy solutions that meet the needs of a particular marginalised group, or groups. Here, we see a clear risk that a broad-brush approach risks designing sweeping ‘one size fits all’ solutions that leave those experiencing multiple disadvantages behind.

Recent years have also seen a growing interest in a ‘place-based’ approach to policymaking in Scotland, particularly in economic policy. While a focus on locally tailored policy solutions was widely welcomed among our research participants, we heard that a new focus on a place-based approach had, in some instances, created new challenges for long-standing equalities agendas. This was a particular concern of policy practitioners working towards racial justice, who felt the place-based agenda at times “rubbed up” against efforts to better understand and address particular forms of inequality experienced by minority ethnic groups in Scotland. Concerns about a place-based approach are echoed in research from Scotland’s Equality and Human Rights Commission, who find that ‘while people from ethnic minorities experience higher levels of poverty and unemployment they don’t necessarily live in the most deprived areas of Scotland’ (Equality and Human Rights Commission 2016). They urge policymakers to broaden their view beyond geographic concentration of disadvantage to also focus on communities who are disadvantaged ‘because of who they are, where they’re from, or the colour of their skin’ (ibid).

Cross-cutting agendas

An intersectional approach to progressing gender equality?

In recent years, the Scottish Government has put a clear focus on gender equality across a range of policy areas: from the Women’s Health Action Plan, to the Equally Safe Strategy, to the Gender Pay Gap Action Plan. Action to reduce poverty has made positive progress towards explicitly recognising the gendered nature of poverty and gendered barriers that sustain economic inequality in Scotland. The First Minister’s National Advisory Council on Women and Girls, established in 2017, is designed to provide independent advice to Scottish Government on action to tackle gender-based inequality. Its recommendations have already shaped Scottish Government policy, focusing on attitudes and culture change in 2018 and assessing policy coherence across government in 2019. This work has been characterised by engaging a wide range of stakeholders and women across Scotland in developing recommendations. The Advisory Council’s work through 2020 is shining a light on intersecting inequalities, and how they shape the lives of women and girls in Scotland.

Intersectionality: revealing the realities of poverty and inequality in Scotland

Participants felt there was strong intersectional gender competence with the Scottish Government's Equalities Unit, but that this seldom extended across government directorates. While a focus on gender inequality over the last parliament was seen as substantial progress, there was some concern that this had led policymakers in some areas to think gendered inequalities were now well understood:

"I think there's a general assumption that people understand women's inequality more than they do. Quite often what we meet is an assumption from policymakers and elsewhere that they understand gender, they understand women's lives [...] there's a lack of recognition that there's professional expertise to women's equality." Participant, third sector

This was particularly clear in the context of economic and social policy, where it was felt policymaking often failed to connect the dots between unequal outcomes and gendered barriers to participation or progression in paid work. This lack of understanding was seen to fuel policymaking that was un-gendered, and hence failed to respond to the reality of women's lives. This extended into understandings of how women experience poverty, and the gendered drivers of poverty in Scotland:

"Across the board there's a lack of awareness about the depth of and the breadth of the problems of women's equality and the same can be said about women's experiences of poverty as well." Participant, third sector

Scotland's Equally Safe strategy for ending violence against women and girls was highlighted as an effective example of a strategy to affect systems change, particularly in the breadth of its scope and through its strong focus on prevention. It looks across criminal justice, to sexual harassment in schools, to occupational segregation, to what needs to be done in the workplace. It's also the only explicit reference to disabled women's experience in *A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People* (2017), which recognises disabled women's disproportionate exposure to violence. We also heard about innovation in service design at Rape Crisis Scotland, where collaboration with specialist equalities organisations supported the development and sign-posting of specialist services, including for migrant, LGBTI and disabled survivors, and for survivors whose first language is not English.

Against a backdrop of patchy progress on mainstreaming gender competence across policymaking in Scotland, intersectional gender competence at the heart of policymaking feels some way away. Gender mainstreaming and the collection, analysis and publication of intersectional, sex-disaggregated gender-sensitive data were identified as central to supporting a deeper understanding of inequalities across Scotland. A model for gender mainstreaming efforts could be expanded and improved to support intersectional analysis of inequality in opportunity and outcomes for different groups of people across Scotland. Without doubt, though, the challenge of embedding intersectional gender competence – that recognises the varied realities of life in Scotland for low-income women, disabled women, Black and minority ethnic women, LGBT women, and migrant women – across government is profound. Here, the Commission, and Scottish Government, can look to the work from the National Advisory Council on Women and Girls.

An intersectional approach to progressing race equality?

Race equality strategy in Scotland has been shaped over the last parliament by the Scottish Government's Race Equality Framework, developed jointly with the Coalition for Race Equality and Rights and independent Race Equality Framework Advisor Kaliani Lyle, and the subsequent *Race Equality Action Plan*. Policy practitioners viewed the 2016 *Race Equality Framework for Scotland* as an example of co-production between government and expert equalities organisations, but there was a view that the plan failed to touch on poverty in adequate detail. The 2017 Action Plan was considered by the research participants we heard from to have fallen short on consultation and co-production of recommendations by comparison. We heard that over the last parliament, serious recommendations to respond to minority ethnic groups' experiences of poverty were felt to have fallen through the cracks between poverty and race equality work, as the Race Equality Framework does not engage explicitly with minority ethnic groups' experiences of poverty in Scotland, while the proposals put forward to tackle poverty through '*Shifting the curve*' (Eisenstadt 2016) neglected to put a focus on particular barriers facing minority ethnic groups in Scotland. We heard there was a lack of evidence on how poverty and wider economic inequalities interact with other forms of inequality, and a particular lack of data on how poverty and other forms of economic inequality are experienced by minority ethnic groups in Scotland.

The *Fairer Scotland Race Equality Action Plan* shows some evidence of steps towards an intersectional approach to its analysis of labour market inequality in Scotland. This included a focus on intersecting inequalities in Scotland's labour market. The action plan notes that "it is unacceptable...that people from minority ethnic communities are twice as likely to be unemployed as people from white communities." The report goes on to note the "particular disadvantage" women from minority ethnic groups experience in Scotland's labour market:

"Female employment rates for the minority ethnic group are typically around 24% lower than male minority ethnic employment rates. This is around three times higher than the gap of around 7% between the employment rates for all males and females living in Scotland."

The Action Plan's discussion of poverty notes that "we know that poverty is gendered, and we know that there is a particular impact on minority ethnic communities [...] minority ethnic women are paying the highest price for the UK Government's austerity agenda". It goes on to explicitly highlight the role of the Poverty and Inequality Commission in ensuring that there is "a specific race and poverty theme" across efforts to eradicate poverty in Scotland. The Commission's work so far, however, was not perceived to have shone a light on how racial inequalities intersect with poverty and/or wider economic inequalities by experts interviewed for this research.

Kaliani Lyle's 2017 report for the Scottish Government 'Addressing race inequality in Scotland: the way forward' laid out four priority action areas with regards to minority ethnic people's experiences of poverty: employment, policy and strategy, increasing income, and childcare. While many of the report's recommendations have been taken forward in some form, there is a lack of transparent data against which to measure outcomes for particular minority ethnic groups. This is particularly clear in the case of childcare, where

recommendations to require childcare providers to take steps to increase the diversity of their staff, or for local authorities to provide targeted information on the availability and benefits of childcare have been taken forward, but there is not yet available data against which to measure key overarching outcomes: namely increased take-up of childcare services, rising employment rates and falling rates of poverty among ethnic minority families in Scotland.

Participants consistently highlighted the challenge of sustained racial inequalities in Scotland and a lack of a consistent focus on race and racialisation in major policy strategies relating to poverty and inequality. It was felt that an understanding of how race and racialisation shapes inequalities across Scotland was too often lacking, with excellent expert organisations often under-resourced and overstretched. While gender competence was recognised in limited parts of government, such as the equalities unit, we found less evidence that expertise in how 'race' and racialisation shape inequalities in Scotland. Participants whose own expertise included race and racialisation pointed to a wider challenge:

"...how racism and racialisation impact on people of colour or migrants is a phenomenon which is specific, and it is hardly understood. The reality of racialisation is different from ableism, and it is different from gendered inequality, or other issues. It's just different, and that's a reality which has not been understood." Participant

This echoed the assessment laid out in the Runnymede Trust's 2020 review of race equality in Scotland makes clear that too often, 'prominent reports and commissions concerned with social and constitutional reform in Scotland have made little mention of race equality as distinct from a generic concern with "fairness" (Meer et al. 2020). Making progress towards an intersectional approach to policymaking in Scotland will clearly depend on building competence on how 'race' and racialisation shape disadvantage in Scotland. While this remains lacking, race equality will continue to be deprioritised or entirely absent from major areas of policy across Scotland.

Government efforts to tackle systemic racism and gender inequality in Scotland clearly cannot be contained to a single strategy but must instead be embedded across government policy and practice. This will require work to embed intersectional gender and race competency across government areas and functions, and for creating effective accountability mechanisms across government – including through policymaking processes that better recognise and respond to the complex reality of inequality in Scotland.

Chapter 5: How could a more deliberately intersectional approach affect the development of policy in Scotland?

Policy making processes in Scotland

Adopting an intersectional approach to tackling poverty and inequality in Scotland will require policymaking that is, at its heart, people-centred, in place of policymaking dictated by administrative boundaries between and within government. While the last parliament has seen substantial efforts to implement cross-cutting policy agendas across government in Scotland, there remains a risk that too much of policy-making happens in silos, leaving gaps in efforts to tackle inequality that are unable to respond to peoples' real-life experience, leaving too many people behind. The Scottish Government's National Performance Framework, refreshed in 2018, was the latest attempt of a number over the last 12 years to embed an outcomes-based approach across government. The National Performance Framework brings together multiple cross-cutting policy agendas in order to assess Scotland's progress – or lack thereof – towards desired outcomes at the national level (Scottish Government 2020). While a focus on outcomes is welcome, it carries an inherent risk that in assessing outcomes for the population as a whole, or for broad social groups, we erase the experiences of people at the margins. In doing so, we risk missing out on an understanding of how outcomes vary across different social groups, and on an evaluation of who is more or less likely to be benefiting from policy interventions. This chapter assesses how far various policy agendas relating to poverty and inequality in Scotland recognise intersecting or overlapping inequalities, and how new approaches to policymaking across several high-profile agendas have been able to affect meaningful change.

The Scottish Government has introduced a range of new activities and priorities aimed at reducing poverty and inequality over the last parliament. Child poverty targets sit alongside targets and legal duties around climate emissions, fuel poverty, fair access and homelessness and housing, with each target supported by specific action plans, budgets and activity designed to make progress. Sitting above these legal duties, the Scottish Government has introduced cross-cutting policy agendas, such as inclusive growth, wellbeing and fair work, together with a cross-cutting performance measurement through the National Performance Framework.

As welcome as many of these targets, duties and policy agendas are, there is a risk that each is seen as separate, and that activity within each becomes siloed within government and across Scotland. In translating the 11 national outcomes, linked to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, into 81 national indicators, there are risks that even this nationwide attempt to move to an outcomes-based approach becomes lost in delivery, as implementation, measurement and data move policy and activity into silos. Without an overarching understanding of the multi-dimensional nature of inequality, these efforts may overlook key interactions between overlapping identities and social positions, making understanding critical dimensions of inequality difficult, and make tackling the reality inequality in Scotland more difficult still.

An intersectional approach puts a focus on the structures and processes that create and sustain inequality. This means attempting to examine and explore policymaking processes

and the perspectives and approaches of policymakers as a crucial piece of the puzzle. Despite progress on some initiatives outlined above, what remains less clear is how policymakers are changing the ways in which they approach their analysis and understanding of poverty, and how they go about designing policy solutions.

A key message we have heard through this research is that it's crucial that an understanding of how a policy will affect those furthest away from power – and that this demands a focus on policymakers and the processes that support policymaking across government in Scotland. While a recent shift towards 'direct' or 'lived' experiences of people who have lived on low incomes, or experienced different forms of disadvantage, is welcome, it is equally important that we examine the perspectives and processes of the powerful in shaping policy and developing strategies that attempt to tackle social inequality. As one participant put it, *"decision makers are absolutely key"*.

Turning the focus inwards

To shape policymaking processes in Scotland and to better recognise the reality of more people's lives and experiences of inequality requires that we look inwards at the role of decision makers and who and how people are involved in policymaking processes. Across our conversations with experts, it was clear that making the shift from intersectionality being a mere 'buzzword' to a reality in which intersectional approaches are embedded across policymaking will require fundamental change in how policymakers and others with power and influence in policymaking processes approach their work.

Too often, government consultation mechanisms maintain, rather than disrupt, status quo thinking. This is often not just a result of the consultation mechanisms themselves, but the approach of people in positions of power who are invited to shape government thinking on policy challenges, and to design solutions:

"I think sometimes once you arrive on commissions – and I say this as an occasional member of commissions – you think you're there because you're an expert, and you're not there because you need to learn too. I think that's been a devastating mistake that's happened over and over again in this policy space in Scotland." Participant, third sector

The power dynamics established and maintained through policy consultation mechanisms can create or lower barriers to participating in policymaking. Decision making bodies in Scotland still largely reflect the balance of power across Scottish society, and too often exclude people facing intersecting barriers by their very design. The perpetuation of dominant power dynamics in decision making structures was particularly clear when it came to race:

"What I've noticed, particularly with people of colour, is that there's normally one or maybe two people in the room - and that's just not going to make that dynamic change. That's just impossible. Yes, they can speak into the space, but nobody there thinks that other fourteen, fifteen people around that table are going to be able to do

whatever work is need there. So the dynamic has to completely shift.”

Participant, third sector

A growing focus on direct experience of inequality

“Hold on a minute: whose lived experience needs examined here?” Participant, third sector

We found reserved enthusiasm for a new focus on direct experience in designing public services, and particularly social security through Scotland’s newly established Social Security Agency. A particularly clear example of this were the Social Security Agency’s User Experience Panels which involve people with experience of benefits being devolved to the Scottish Government in shaping policy mechanisms in Scotland. While a growing focus on consulting people with direct experience of particular barriers or of accessing particular services was widely welcome, we heard concerns from a range of participants on the limitations of User Experience Panels, and the demographic composition of their membership. Despite recognition that direct experience was as a valuable form of knowledge, we heard concerns that findings from direct experience research had at points been *“weaponised against other forms of knowledge”*, whereby if direct experience participants – sometimes referred to within government as ‘real people’ – had not placed particular value on an approach during a facilitated consultation session, that approach was disregarded even in spite of other forms of supporting evidence. There were concerns about how well-placed government policymakers were to facilitate this type of research, particularly with groups facing multiple oppressions.

This limitation was echoed by participants who urged the need for a ‘critical reading’ of direct experience, whereby experts with competency in e.g. ‘race’ and racialisation and/or gender would interpret direct experience to assess systemic barriers and the role of structural inequalities in shaping these experiences. Without this critical reading there was concern that an understanding of structural inequalities could be disregarded, with smaller demographic groups’ experiences pushed to the margins.

“It’s not just about lived experience but a critical reading of that lived experience that can shape policy-making... There is always a risk that it becomes just about people’s experiences, not about the people that need to hear them.” Participant, third sector

We also heard specific concerns about how internalised stigma could shape insights offered by people discussing their own experiences, and the need for researchers to recognise where participants reflected ‘received wisdoms’. In one specific example, a policy practitioner described how direct experience research undertaken by their organisation had discussed the need for ‘culturally appropriate childcare’ as a concern raised by a particular minority ethnic group in Glasgow. Further dialogue with mothers in this particular community had established that in actuality the barrier preventing families from accessing formal childcare services was the fear that their children would experience racism in a childcare setting.

An emerging stream of Scottish Government work on user-involved design was highlighted as a welcome and encouraging approach to recognising and responding to intersecting inequalities.

We also found innovative approaches to policymaking and examples of co-production with young people in Scotland in designing policy solutions. The Scottish Government's Fairer Future Panel, which sees young people co-produce policy ideas for a fairer Scotland with the support of Young Scot, is a particularly encouraging example of bringing people affected by an issue into the centre of policymaking and drawing on the expertise of a third sector organisation. Several participants in this research also pointed to Scotland's independent Care Review as an example of an intersectional approach to policy making, drawing particularly on how the review was designed to hand power over to people with lived experience of the care system, and in the depth and breadth of its work to listen to people's experiences. Over the past few years, the review has supported a sustained focus on the multiple disadvantages facing care-experienced young people in Scotland.

Power and trust

Expert policymakers and practitioners stressed the importance of rebalancing power and building trust in work that brings people with direct experience of inequalities and marginalisation into the centre of policy making processes. As extensive work from academics and policymakers has made clear, this process requires substantial investment of time and resource to bring people from where they are in their lives to a position from which they have the resources and capabilities to contribute fully to policy development.

"There's no way of doing it that isn't quite slow, and responsive to what people's actual need are as compared to what you might think they need at the outset"
Participant, third sector

This requires careful attention to be paid to logistical and ethical considerations, such as covering transport costs ahead of time, and arranging appropriate compensation for people's time, but also to the wider dynamics that shape knowledge production. Experts made clear that power dynamics are a critical part of this work:

"If you're not handing over power to people to decide what to do and tell you, then you can't empower them. Empowering is handing over power. There is a need for some realism about what government and policymakers can do in that space, and that there is definitely a role for other organisations." Participant, third sector

Experts agreed that the role of specialist organisations could not be replicated by government given the complex power dynamics and the critical need to build trust among participants. This was seen as an even greater concern among more marginalised groups that are less understood by policymakers. Recent work from Scotland's Poverty Truth Commission and Equality and Human Rights Commission were offered as strong examples of enabling people with direct experience to shape policy development. We also heard about the critical role trusted community organisations and service providers can play as an interlocutor between government and communities, brokering relationships and facilitating

dialogue that relies on strong and established trust that could not be built directly with government.

Learning from Scotland's Independent Care Review

Scotland's Independent Care Review, which was established in 2016 and reported in 2019, offers some lessons in how to bring together a vast range of voices and shift power away from institutions and towards people with direct experience. The Review conducted a 'root and branch' review of Scotland's care system, hearing from some 5,500 people – over half of whom had lived in care. To do so, the Review established a clear focus on 'properly listening' that was embedded across the Review's work and was embedded in its structures and processes.

The Review incorporated new forms on accountability into its ways of working from its earliest stages, with a clear message from the Review's leadership, and Fiona Duncan as the Review's independent Chair, that they were ultimately accountable to care experienced young people across Scotland. The structure of the Review saw at least half of leadership positions filled by people who had lived in care. The Review team established a dedicated participation hub, which sought to meet people on their own terms. This work built on the '1000 voices' campaign led by Who Cares? Scotland, which was staffed by a dedicated team who sought to hear from as many people as possible, and to ensure all decisions made were guided by children and families the Review heard from. The explicit purpose of this work was to listen and to build relationships, in a significant shift in power from historic models of participation.

The Review sought to take a 'relational approach' to their work, with a focus on building quality relationships, rather than on extracting data or insights from people involved. There was also a focus on closing the feedback loop so that instead of just speaking to 'representatives' from expert organisations, the Review partnered with membership organisations and networks to hear from their members directly, and the review put a focus on welcoming fresh perspectives throughout the processes of refining findings and building solutions. One way in which the Review sought to do this was by striving to reach beyond 'already heard' voices to hear the 'quieter voices' of those who had not already had access to a platform through which to share their perspective – with a focus on under-represented groups such as younger and disabled children.

The recommendations made through the Care Review are now being taken forward through a programme of work called 'the Promise' which at the time of writing is recruiting for a staff team to be housed within Scottish Government. Advertised roles emphasise the value of care experience, in a further example of looking inwards at who leads policymaking and what expertise they bring to the table. This is an encouraging example of how government can think differently about how to approach complex policy challenges, not just by looking outwards, but by looking at how government structures and processes can be improved by handing power over to people with direct experience in order to build more effective solutions.

Designing better solutions: a relational approach to the welfare state

In implementing these cross-cutting agendas there are additional risks that people facing multiple barriers are overlooked in delivery. In 2015, Naomi Eisenstadt wrote explicitly about what the reality of multiple disadvantage means for service design in *The Life Chances of Young People in Scotland*:

*“It is certainly true that, as the depth and complexity of disadvantage increases, responses need to be tailored to individual need. And needs will vary as much within as between groups. A tailored approach is inevitably more expensive and, in many cases, will require interventions from a number of agencies. However, improving outcomes for each of these groups – and, indeed, for those individuals who fall into more than one of these categories – should bring cost savings in the long term. It is also a principle of social justice: **providing the same kinds of inputs to everyone, without thinking about differentiation, will always result in inequality of outcomes. Services should be specifically designed so as to iron out the inequality in personal circumstances that affects those facing disadvantage.**”*

This message remains urgent in 2020. Designing services that can meet people where they are and succeed in ‘ironing out’ inequality will take deep and sustained work in partnership with people that use them. It will require an overhaul of long-embedded structures of service design in Scotland as at the UK level. There is encouraging progress already being made in Scotland: the Social Security Agency charter has embedded a human rights-based approach to new and newly devolved social security services, and design work being led by Scottish Government’s Chief Design Officer Cat Macaulay has put a renewed focus on inclusive and accessible service design, shaped by work with citizens. Learning from and adopting co-production approaches to service design could have a transformational effect on how we tackle poverty and inequality in Scotland, but this will require leadership, resourcing and a fundamental shift in how policymakers and policy bodies – including the Poverty and Inequality Commission – approach their work.

Breaking down siloes

Participants described the limitations of consultation mechanisms that encouraged a siloed approach to understanding inequality in Scotland. We heard concerns about standard government consultation processes, through which officials would take something of a ‘tick box’ approach to engaging equalities experts. In a typical scenario, we might expect a Scottish Parliament committee, for example, to hear from a single representative from an organisation focussed on disability, a single representative of an organisation specialising on gender and a single representative from an organisation focussed on race and ethnic inequalities. This approach was presumed to provide a sufficiently full picture of the reality of inequalities across Scotland. As one participant described: *“It’s a nightmare. Whatever it was set up for, it wasn’t set up for people”*. We also heard participants’ concerns that there was an expectation that equalities organisations would take a one-dimensional approach to understanding inequalities, which could pigeon-hole experts. Participants also spoke to resourcing challenges, particularly at the intersections of multiple inequalities. Resourcing

challenges were particularly clear in the context of the women's sector, in which Black women's organisations in Scotland face chronic insecurity and under-resourcing. This under-resourcing across specialist service providers and the broader equalities sector was felt to enable policy-making processes that often did not respond to the different experiences within broad marginalised groups, including women and ethnic minority groups.

The recently closed Equalities consultation on Social Security Scotland has highlighted concerns about a siloed approach to considering equalities, and the need to a more *"explicitly intersectional approach that recognises the complexity of people's lives"* (Consultation response, Scottish Government 2020) as well as a need to adopt a wider conception of equalities, beyond *"the statutory requirements of considering equalities only in relation to protected characteristics"*.

Public sector equalities duties have been used as a tool to encourage mainstreaming across policymaking. The recently established Fairer Scotland Duty places a legal responsibility on public bodies in Scotland to consider how they can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage when making strategic decisions. In the Scottish Government's Fairer Scotland strategy they include an explicit reference to intersectionality in relation to the new duty, suggesting ambitions to take an intersectional approach to assessing inequalities of outcome across public sector duties: "We recognize the importance of intersectionality for example – low income minority ethnic women and minority ethnic disabled people." We heard concerns that the new duty was overly vague, to the extent that *"its vagueness imperils action"*, and risks confounding public bodies. The new Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights Directorate should assess how far equalities duties support an intersectional analysis of inequalities of outcome in Scotland.

Moving towards an understanding of structural inequalities

"There has emerged a consensus...that you can take a generic approach to anti-poverty work, and that will work" Participant, third sector

An intersectional approach to policymaking requires analysis of structural inequalities. In anti-poverty work, this demands an analysis of the wider social and economic structures that create and sustain inequality. Realising an intersectional approach to ending poverty and inequality in Scotland is a radical vision that moves away from generic language of 'fairness' and considers the systemic change that is needed to rebalance power and resource across our society. As one participant explained, it means asking *"not what about people's experiences' needs changed, but what about the system needs changed so that things happen differently in the future?"*

We heard of resistance towards intersectional analysis of inequalities on the grounds that illuminating the multi-dimensional nature of inequality was 'too hard' or 'too complex'. As one participant explained:

"The causes and the consequences of women's inequality are so interlinked to every aspect of their lives – so there's labour market inequality, there's economic inequality, there's violence against women, there's political inequality,

there's inequalities in communities. So we can make bit of progress on some aspects, but until there's a recognition that there's an entire systems change that we're looking at – and for some I think that's a conceptual leap too far.” Participant, third sector

Data collection and analysis: where are the gaps?

“What gets measured does get policy made around it, and also shapes our understanding of what the problem is.” Participant, third sector

“We need to see investment so that we improve data collection, we can improve the systems in place for gathering data, and we can improve the quality and the range of need to invest in better data collection practices, and we need analysts that can interpret that data and can apply that to their work.” Participant, third sector

When asked about the ways in which a lack of data presents a barrier to better understanding intersecting inequalities, participants described misconceptions that presented additional barriers to intersectional analysis. Several described encountering the perception that by supplying intersectional data breakdowns they would opening something of a Pandora's box, with analysts opening themselves up to the expectation that they provide further and further breakdowns, until data was potentially identifiable and producing breakdowns was impractical. The research participants we spoke with urged that this was not the case:

“I'm not asking you to give me [data on] every intersection that exists in Scotland. But if you could give me an intersection about women and race; women and disability; women and sexuality – that would give me such a picture that it would allow me to do the work I do better.” Participant, third sector

We also heard that requests for data to be broken down by more than one characteristic were often met with concerns about sample size limitations. This speaks to a wider problem concerning a lack of high quality large-N datasets through which analysts within and outwith government can analyse multiple factors driving poverty and inequality across Scotland's population. There are clear practical limitations to the inference that can be drawn from smaller and smaller sub-samples of key ONS datasets which can limit both the scope of national statistical releases and insights generated by researchers across academic and third sector organisations which often utilise the same data sources. It was clear, however, that publishing experimental statistics, or statistics where larger confidence intervals are flagged, as is routinely the case in data broken down by local geography, would be far more helpful than the status quo which is characterised by the absence of intersectional analysis.

We heard particular concerns about the limited availability of data broken down by ethnicity. Policy practitioners working on racial justice explained the limitations imposed on their work by data categories that amalgamated various ethnic groups, and hence was of limited usefulness in understanding different experiences of inequality in Scotland. A particularly clear-cut example was offered in Scottish Government statistics that pool together 'Asian or British Asian' ethnic groups, which provide a limited picture by averaging

across different minority ethnic groups which evidence from the UK level suggests might fare significantly differently on key economic outcomes. Evidence from the Runnymede Trust finds, for example, that across the UK British Indians report higher levels of household wealth than other minority ethnic groups, while British Bangladeshi and British Pakistani households reported average levels of wealth far below the UK average (Khan 2020). In Scotland, drawing across various Asian minority ethnic groups may obscure significant differences in outcomes across, for example, Chinese Scots, Pakistani Scots, or Indian Scots. In doing so, these practical obstacles fundamentally limit how well policymakers can understand barriers faced by people from minority ethnic backgrounds, and crucially, how effectively we can develop policy solutions to improve those outcomes.

Data gaps around intersecting inequalities have been recognised by the Scottish Government since the 2017 Equality Evidence Strategy. Scotland's Equality Evidence Strategy 2017-21 sets out evidence gaps in equality data and a strategic approach to strengthening Scotland's equality evidence base. This includes an encouraging recognition of intersectionality, and the ways in which it *'requires government and the wider public sector to think more carefully about what services are provided, how, and to whom'* (Scottish Government 2017). Concerns about a lack of intersectional data on employment outcomes were raised in 2017 – but progress towards closing these gaps appears to be too slow, and too limited.

A lack of data on ethnicity as it interacts with other characteristics or social positions is a clear theme across the Equality Evidence Strategy. But despite the range of data gaps highlighted, policy practitioners we spoke with described persistent evidence gaps spanning economic and labour market inequality, education, social housing, and access to other key public services such as childcare. Despite the evidence strategy document highlighting a need for data on ethnicity to be more readily available in relation to free school meals and clothing grants, experts described a concerning trend in which the prospects for access reliable data broken down by ethnicity were getting worse, not better, particularly in relation to uptake of these two forms of social security provision (Scottish Government 2017). We also found persistent concerns about a broad lack of data on ethnicity and poverty, and serious reservations about the impact or effectiveness of the Equality Evidence Review. This included specific concerns about gaps in access to social housing and social security by ethnicity, and a lack of sustained engagement on evidence of ethnic minority groups' experiences of labour market inequality.

We also heard of concerns about a heavy reliance on protected characteristics alone (as per the Equality Act 2010) to assess equalities impacts. We heard concerns from practitioners that data are not made routinely available on a wider set of characteristics, including caring responsibilities, migration status or background, and care experience. Our direct experience interviews underlined the potential impact of a lack of data, and lack of policy attention, on real lives. This was particularly clear in the case of different migrant communities across Scotland, where we heard that the distinct needs and circumstances of settled populations, recent migrants, and people seeking asylum were poorly understood across a range of policy areas.

Data to support policy evaluation

“If your goal is simply to get somebody into any job at all then you will behave in a very different way as a system than if your job is to think of the lifelong experience of poverty of individuals within that system [...] measurement is vitally important.” Participant, third sector

Gaps in data collection are currently limiting the usefulness of both UK-level and national data sources, and of policy monitoring and evaluation across government and public services Scotland. Too often, policies to reduce poverty or inequality in Scotland are introduced without clear outcomes against which their success will be measured – making it challenging to evaluate their impact across the population, and near impossible to measure their impact on groups facing multiple, overlapping barriers. One participant gave the example of the Flexible Workforce Investment Fund, which provides data on headline participation rates by gender, but no detail on what types of training women are accessing, or whether those types of training are likely to lead to progression, or skills building. We heard concerns about the data limitations posed by the ways in which government funded schemes are implemented, particularly where data on uptake of new schemes or interventions relies on existing data collection systems, e.g. through colleges, which can provide a limited contextual picture, and rely on individual practitioners to collect data.

“It’s a process that enables decision makers to reflect on their own ability to make decisions, and to examine the differences that may lie between what they’ve done and what they think they’ve done.” Participant, third sector

We also heard that data gaps presented a challenge to Equality Impact Assessments, where a “disjointed” process saw challenges in gathering or accessing appropriate data, in knowing what data to use for an Equality Impact Assessment, and in then using it to assess a particular programme or policy. There is also a clear need for greater accountability in producing consistent, high-quality Equality Impact Assessments across areas of government in Scotland. The National Advisory Council on Women and Girls, alongside Engender and others, have raised concerns that the impact of Equality Impact Assessments on decision making is diminished by a piecemeal approach to ensuring the timeliness and quality of these assessments, or what action is taken to ensure learning from them is integrated into policy and service improvement.

Chapter 6: Key findings and ideas for change

An intersectional approach to policymaking can help us understand and respond to **real-world problems** by interrogating the complex reality of social inequality, rather than shying away from it. By looking beyond single categories or identities, we can develop better understandings of complex problems and design solutions that recognise the reality of inequalities as they play out in people's lives. This can shed light on the structures and processes that drive social exclusion, and help develop solutions that stop people facing multiple disadvantages from 'falling through the cracks'.

An intersectional approach encourages us to **ask different questions**: instead of asking how, for example, women experience poverty as compared to men, it asks how different groups of women experience poverty, compared to other groups of women, and as compared to other groups of men. It also challenges us **not to generalise across broad categories**, by revealing how treating marginalised groups as homogenous can tend to privilege the experiences of those who are relatively more advantaged (Christofferson 2019).

It provides a **multi-level analysis** of how inequality operates: examining how systems and structures of power shape people's lives, as well as identities and categories of difference. As well as providing a lens through which to better understand individual people's realities, intersectionality looks at "interlocking systems" over inequality, and how they shape our economy, politics and wider world. It also encourages researchers and policymakers **to reflect on their own social position**, and how this shapes how they understand social problems, as well as how policy solutions are developed and implemented. By taking this lens to the complex challenges of poverty and inequality, we can hope to develop a better grasp of the challenges we face here in Scotland, and to design solutions that can build a more equal society for all.

It is important to acknowledge that the work for this report and the findings and recommendations below were written in 2020. Hence the surrounding policy context and organisational adoption of intersectional approaches to working have changed in some areas since this work was originally conducted.

Findings

1. There's currently a widespread lack of intersectional data on outcomes, which is halting progress on understanding and tackling inequalities in Scotland. Without regular intersectional analysis of outcomes across government, evidence gaps will persist, and key intersections will remain invisible. Better quality data will rely on new data collection practices and new routine analysis.

2. Current policymaking processes are often not conducive to understanding the reality of inequality in Scotland and rarely take an intersectional approach to analysing problems or developing solutions. We need new tools to bring people into policy making processes, and a greater focus on the limitations of policy-makers' perspectives. This could be taken forward through developing good practice standards in co-production and participative policy making, drawing on existing expertise across Scotland.

3. Tackling inequalities requires a sustained focus across government and public service providers on improving outcomes. There is currently a lack of coherence across policymaking, and a lack of competence in how structural inequalities such as gender, race, disability and migration status shape experiences and outcomes in Scotland. Developing and mainstreaming gender competence across government will be critical in changing culture and shifting outcomes.

4. A 'one size fits all' approach to narrowing inequalities leaves people behind, particularly where multiple inequalities intersect. Policymakers should seek to better understand who existing policy interventions and public service provision models serve and who they serve less well, with a focus on lowering barriers to accessing services and resources for particular groups.

5. Policy making processes in Scotland reinforce siloed approaches to tackling inequality. Policy making processes should be opened up to a wider range of voices and experts across Scotland, and expertise on how and where inequalities intersect should be sought out where it is not already engaged.

6. There are no shortcuts or silver bullets. Uprooting the structural inequalities that fuel poverty and inequality in Scotland will take dedicated, sustained work and appropriate resourcing across all areas of government, including work looking inwards at the role of government and public institutions. This will require a particular focus on systemic racism in Scotland, which is not currently well understood or addressed across policymaking.

Recommendations to the Poverty and Inequality Commission

1. The Poverty and Inequality Commission should examine their own working practices and develop a strategy for embedding intersectional analysis across their work.

This should seek to include analysis of how structural inequalities such as class, race, gender and disability shape and interact with other factors to create distinct experiences of poverty, with a focus on designing solutions that recognise and respond to the reality of people's lives.

2. The Commission should embed partnership working with experts by experience at the heart of their work on understanding poverty and inequality in Scotland and on designing policy solutions. This should be supported by the development of a 'gold standard' framework for participatory working, and work with experts in structural inequalities.

This should focus on learning from experts in co-production, establishing lasting relationships with communities and community groups, and on hearing from those who are often furthest away from support. Partnership work should focus not just on understanding barriers and drivers of poverty, but on building solutions. This should be supported by expert facilitation and take a wellbeing-based approach, ensuring participants are equal partners in designing work from the outset. Where some direct experience approaches have focused solely on capturing people's experiences, the Commission's work should go further by offering a critical reading of those experiences that seeks to identify systemic barriers facing particular groups.

3. The Commission should partner with community groups across Scotland to build long-term relationships with people with direct experience of poverty and/or other forms of inequality. Having designed a co-production approach with experts, this work could prioritise relationships with groups that are less often heard from in the poverty debate in Scotland, including asylum seekers, refugees and Gypsy/travellers. From this foundation, the Commission could establish a broader advisory group of people with direct experience of poverty and/or other dimensions of inequality, who participate in the Commission's work defining problems and developing solutions, working in a paid capacity.

4. The Commission should gather evidence and develop recommendations on how to address persistent gaps in understanding of ethnic minority groups' experiences of poverty in Scotland

The Commission should partner with experts in race and ethnic inequalities to gather evidence and map gaps in understanding of minority ethnic groups' experiences and how they relate to poverty. This should inform recommendations to address the specific weaknesses in integrating an understanding of racial and ethnic inequalities into work to tackle poverty and inequality in Scotland. This could span intersectional analysis of minority ethnic women, minority ethnic disabled people, minority ethnic migrants (including settled and new migrant experiences), and younger and older minority ethnic people's experiences and outcomes.

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