

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: Glasgow Caledonian University		
Unit of Assessment: 20 - Social Work and Social Policy		
Title of case study: Tackling Child Poverty Policy in Scotland		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2012 – 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Prof. Stephen Sinclair Prof. John H. McKendrick	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of Social Policy Professor in Social Justice	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2006 – present 1997 – present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2012 – 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact Research by the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit (SPIRU) has made a significant contribution to shaping the national development and local delivery of child poverty policy in Scotland. Our research into the implementation of the 2010 Child Poverty Act [R1, R2] and the effects of austerity upon local authorities [R4] and lower income households in Scotland [R3], informed the 2017 Child Poverty (Scotland) Act. SPIRU were invited by the Scottish Government to join the Local Child Poverty Co-ordination Group, with our research and advice shaping the annual Local Child Poverty Action Reports produced by Scottish local authorities.		
2. Underpinning research This Impact Case Study is underpinned by original research, data analysis, policy commentary and scholarship undertaken by SPIRU over several years. SPIRU's co-Directors (Stephen Sinclair and John McKendrick) frequently work in partnership with third sector organisations, particularly the Poverty Alliance, Child Poverty Action Group and One Parent Families Scotland. SPIRU is also a leading exponent of participatory research methods and co-production with community groups and service users, which extends the uptake and application of our work. This expertise is testified to by the review commissioned from SPIRU of best practice in involving those with lived experience in research and policy by the Poverty and Inequality Commission [R5]. In 2012 Save the Children commissioned SPIRU to investigate how local authorities were delivering the Scottish Government's child poverty strategy under the 2010 UK Child Poverty Act [G1]. SPIRU surveyed elected leaders, chief executives and lead officials in all Scottish local authorities. Fewer than 50% of officials felt that child poverty was a priority for their council. Only 16% of Scottish local authorities had a child poverty action plan, and none had a specific target to reduce child poverty [R1]. Almost half of respondents were unfamiliar with relevant local data, and one quarter unaware of best practice to reduce child poverty. SPIRU's research identified the absence in Scotland of a statutory local authority child poverty duty (in contrast with England and Wales) as a significant barrier inhibiting the effectiveness of the Scottish Government's action plan [R2]. These findings were noted by the Scottish Government [C1] and influenced the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 and subsequent guidance issued to local authorities.		

In 2015 SPIRU was commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to examine how local authorities and deprived communities were responding to austerity measures [G2]. This research involved focus groups and interviews with policy makers, service providers and community groups in a case study authority. It showed how significant cuts to over-stretched local services had shifted additional (and in many cases unsustainable) risks onto vulnerable communities and disadvantaged households, deepening the intensity of poverty [R4].

SPIRU has collaborated for several years with a network of third sector organisations to shape the policy agenda in Scotland through the influential and much utilised Poverty in Scotland series [R3]. Publication of Poverty in Scotland is timed to ensure that child poverty is at the forefront of Scottish Parliamentary election campaigns. It is highly successful in doing so, and referenced extensively in the media, political speeches and debates. The 2016 edition drew upon the results of original research, secondary data analysis and policy commentary to document the persistence of poverty in Scotland as a result of UK welfare reforms. In particular, the book demonstrated the negative consequences of scrapping the targets in the 2010 UK Child Poverty Act. It recommended topping up Child Benefit, a proposal subsequently championed by the 'Give Me Five' campaign, which led to the introduction of the Scottish Child Payment in 2020.

3. References to the research

The research underpinning SPIRU's impact on policy and practice is published in peer reviewed articles, a book which is a central reference point on poverty in Scotland, and nationally significant research reports.

- [R1] McKendrick, J.H. and Sinclair, S. (2012) Local Action to Tackle Child Poverty in Scotland. Edinburgh: Save the Children.
<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/local-action-tackle-child-poverty-scotland>
- [R2] Sinclair, S. and McKendrick, J.H. (2014) 'Tackling Child Poverty Locally: Principles, Priorities and Practicalities in Challenging Times', Scottish Affairs, 23 (4): 454-485.
<https://www.euppublishing.com/doi/full/10.3366/scot.2014.0044>
- [R3] McKendrick, J.H. et al. (eds) (2016) Poverty in Scotland 2016: Tools for Transformation. London: Child Poverty Action Group. (ISBN: 9781910715185).
<https://www.open.edu/openlearn/sites/www.open.edu.openlearn/files/povertyinScotland2016aspublished.pdf>
- [R4] McKendrick, J.H. et al. (2016) 'Conceptualising Austerity in Scotland as a Risk Shift: Ideas and Implications', Scottish Affairs, 25 (4): 451-487.
<https://www.euppublishing.com/doi/full/10.3366/scot.2016.0152>
- [R5] McKendrick, J.H. and Brown, J. (2018) Listening to Lived Experience of Poverty in Scotland. Poverty and Inequality Commission.
<https://povertyinequality.scot/publication/listening-to-the-lived-experience-of-poverty-in-scotland/>

The following research grants and commissions funded this impact.

- [G1] Local Action to Tackle Child Poverty in Scotland. Save the Children, 2013-14 - <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/local-action-tackle-child-poverty-scotland>

- [G2] Redistribution of Social and Societal Risk: The Impact on Individuals, Their Networks and Communities in Scotland - Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2015 - <https://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/default/files/jrf/migrated/files/social-societal-risk-full.pdf>
- [G3] Scottish Government - SPIRU Analytical Partnership, 2018-21 - <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2018/07/local-child-poverty-action-report-guidance/documents/child-poverty-act-cpb-local-action-plans-guidance-june-2018-revised-pdf/child-poverty-act-cpb-local-action-plans-guidance-june-2018-revised-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/Child%2BPoverty%2BAct%2B-%2BCPB%2BLocal%2BAction%2BPlans%2B-%2BGuidance%2B-%2BJune%2B2018%2B-%2Brevised.pdf>

4. Details of the impact

SPIRU's research on child poverty underpins our analytical partnership with the Scottish Government (2018-21) [G3], which is described in the national child poverty strategy:

"We're providing funding for the... Scottish Poverty & Inequality Research Unit to provide analytical expertise for local area child poverty planning... Professor John McKendrick and Professor Stephen Sinclair, who lead SPIRU, have a long-established interest and expertise in understanding how poverty is experienced by people in their local communities, and the types of action that can make a difference. To help support local partners we are providing new funding to SPIRU to support their engagement with local authorities and their local health boards to help develop and understand actions that influence child poverty and to share best practice." [C2]

As one of the national partners supporting the delivery of the child poverty strategy, SPIRU has a central role in national policy development [C3]. This role enables us to address issues our research identified, particularly by assisting local authorities develop their statutory annual Local Child Poverty Action Reports (LCPARs). SPIRU provides analytical support to help local authorities understand and use evidence on local conditions effectively, identify relevant policy priorities, increase awareness of best practice in key areas (such as reducing the cost of the school day, increasing uptake of free school meals), and establish appropriate performance monitoring and reporting systems. SPIRU produced guidance and a feedback framework which local authorities use to produce their LCPARs. Our support and advice also led to revisions of several draft LCPARs and significant improvements to the first annual reports submitted in June 2019. The beneficiaries of our research are therefore national policy makers and local government officials, and the disadvantaged communities and low income households relying on public services.

The value and impact of SPIRU's contribution was noted in the Scottish Government First Year Progress Report, 2018-19 [C4]. Testimony to SPIRU's impact on national and local child poverty policy is also provided by several members of the Local Child Poverty Co-ordination Group and other national stakeholders [S2]:

"SPIRU play a key role in providing support, advice and guidance to local areas in order to better understand the action required to effectively tackle poverty. In particular their influence shaped the feedback from national partners, ensuring a methodical agreed process was followed. Their influence has helped ensure that local areas extract learning from the first year's process and are encouraged to build upon their success. Their contribution and balanced input is valued by both local and national partners." **Child Poverty Lead, Social Justice and Regeneration Division, Scottish Government [S1]**

"SPIRU have provided invaluable input to the development of numerous local child poverty action reports which has in turn helped to ensure a more focused and outcome driven approach to understanding and tackling child poverty at local level in Scotland."

National Co-ordinator - Local Child Poverty Action Reports, Improvement Service [S2]

"Professor McKendrick and Professor Sinclair are key contributing members of the Local Child Poverty Co-ordination Group.

Specific examples of where SPIRU's expertise has contributed to the joint work plan delivery include:

- Maintaining close dialogue with local child poverty leads to understand their opportunities and challenges in producing LCPARs, and work with them to strengthen their action and partnership approaches.
- Providing critical friend feedback on draft LCPARs using a framework they co-produced to ensure consistent feedback.
- Developing and applying the use of an Action Learning Set with national and local stakeholder on the contribution of transport in tackling child poverty.

SPIRU's contribution has made a positive impact through assisting local partners develop and improve their strategies to address child poverty." **Organisational Lead for Child Poverty, NHS Public Health Scotland [S3]**

"CPAG has hugely valued the contribution that SPIRU makes. SPIRU brings accessible academic evidence and analysis to the work we are engaged in at local and national level. They are approachable and responsive and always willing to bring their expertise to the policy influencing and policy making process." **Director, Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland [S4]**

"The Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit has made a vital contribution to the delivery of the Every Child, Every Chance child poverty strategy by advising local authorities on their Local Child Poverty Action Reports. The impact of SPIRU's work is evident in improvements to several of these reports, and the shared learning culture they have helped to cultivate in partnership with the Poverty Alliance and other national partners". **Director of the Poverty Alliance [S5]**

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- [C1] Scottish Government (2013) Annual Report for the Child Poverty Strategy for Scotland 2013
<https://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20170115233605/http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2013/09/2212/downloads> (p.12).
- [C2] Scottish Government (2018) Every Child, Every Chance Child Poverty Strategy
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/child-chance-tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-2018-22/> (p.96).
- [C3] Scottish Government (2020) Every Child, Every Chance Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan, Second Year Progress Report, 2019-20
<https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2020/08/tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-second-year-progress-report-2019-20/documents/tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-second-year-progress-report-2019-20/tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-second-year-progress-report-2019-20/govscot%3Adocument/tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-second-year-progress-report-2019-20.pdf> (p.55).
- [C4] Scottish Government (2019) Every Child, Every Chance Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan, First Year Progress Report, 2018-19

<https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/progress-report/2019/06/tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-first-year-progress-report-2018-19/documents/child-chance-tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-first-year-progress-report-2018-19/child-chance-tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-first-year-progress-report-2018-19/govscot%3Adocument/child-chance-tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-first-year-progress-report-2018-19.pdf> (p.90).

The following senior officials and partners are happy to be contacted to verify the impact of our contribution to national, local and community / civil society action to tackle poverty:

- [S1] Head of Social Justice Strategy, Scottish Government
- [S2] National Child Poverty Co-ordinator, Improvement Service
- [S3] Organisational Lead for Child Poverty, NHS Health Scotland
- [S4] Director, Child Poverty Action Group
- [S5] Director of the Poverty Alliance