

Social Recovery Taskforce
25 February 2021 at 14:00
Via Microsoft Teams

Agenda

1. Welcome and Apologies
Chair
2. Minute of Previous Meeting
Chair Attached
3. Matters Arising
Chair
4. Universal Credit in Glasgow: third working paper from Policy Scotland
Sarah Weakley Attached
5. If not now, when? Social Renewal Advisory Board report
Tressa Burke/Scottish Government Attached
6. Mental Health Update
Fiona Moss/Public Health Oversight Board
7. Workstreams – Reporting Template
John Dawson
8. Workstream Updates – Roundtable
9. Meeting Schedule:

18/03/2021, 14:00
15/04/2021, 14:00
20/05/2021, 14:00
10/06/2021, 14:00
08/07/2021, 14:00

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Social Recovery Task Force

26th January 2021, at 14:00

via Microsoft Teams

Present: Councillor Jennifer Layden, Glasgow City Council (Chair); Councillor Richard Bell, Glasgow City Council; Councillor Ruairi Kelly, Glasgow City Council; Bernadette Monaghan, Glasgow City Council, Community Empowerment Services; Judith Hunter, Glasgow City Council, Community Empowerment Services; Des McNulty, University of Glasgow; Ian Bruce, Glasgow Third Sector Interface; Colin Lee, BAME Representative; Pete Seaman, Glasgow Centre for Population Health; Gary l'Anson, Police Scotland; Catriona Milosevic, Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership; John Dawson, GCC Chief Executive Department; Robin Ashton, Glasgow Kelvin College; Vicky Bond, GCC CED; Tressa Burke, Glasgow Disability Alliance; Douglas Taylor, Glasgow Third Sector Interface; Chris Harkins, Glasgow Centre for Population Health; Lorraine Barrie, Glasgow Equality Forum; Paul Buchanan, Glasgow Colleges Regional Board; Gary Dover, Glasgow City Health & Social Care Partnership; Dawn Fyfe, Glasgow Women's Voluntary Sector Network; Candy Walker, Glasgow's Advice & Information Network (GAIN); Shona Mitchell, Skills Development Scotland; Fiona Moss, Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership; Valerie McNeice, Glasgow Centre for Population Health; Gabrielle MacBeth, Glasgow Women's Library; Sarah Weakley, Academic Advisory Group; Afton Hill, Glasgow City Council, Strategic Policy & Planning (Equalities); Kevin Murphy, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service; Christopher Casey, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service; Shona Mitchell, Skills Development Scotland; Mike McNally, Glasgow City Council Glasgow Partnership for Economic Growth Representative; Kirsti Hay, Glasgow City Council, Violence Against Women; Frances Monaghan, Wise Women; Cormac Quinn, Glasgow City Council, Strategic Policy and Planning (Equalities); Nick Brown, Volunteer Glasgow; David Maxwell, Volunteer Glasgow; Matthew Barret, GCC Chief Executive Department.

In attendance:

Mary McPhail, Glasgow City Council, Community Empowerment Services

Gerald Tonner, Glasgow City Council, Community Empowerment Services

Apologies:

Linda De Caestecker, Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership; Jatin Haria, BAME Representative; Jill Miller, Glasgow Life; Martin Cassidy, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service; Sharon Kelly, Skills Development Scotland; Marshall Poulton, Glasgow City Council, Neighbourhoods and Sustainability (Transport); Sue John, Glasgow Women's Library; Alan Benson, Glasgow Third Sector Interface; Gavin Slater, Glasgow City Council, Neighbourhoods & Sustainability, (Sustainability).

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1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Minute of Previous Meeting

No amendments were requested and the minute was approved.

3. Matters Arising

No matters were raised.

4. Community Engagement Update

Judith's team are still carrying out calls and a meeting has been arranged with Glasgow Life next week to start talking about planning code and analysing results. The calls have been recognised as challenging at times; although we're back in lockdown, people who were on the previous shielding list are not getting the same support. Issues coming out across all age groups are depression, anxiety, loneliness and isolation. The mental health impact on people with addictions has not yet been analysed and will be looked at soon.

On the impact on mental health, it was noted that some services have closed or reduced. The mental health issue was flagged up as a theme at the first SRT meeting and the Chair requested that it be prioritised on the agenda for the next meeting.

Ian reported on his work with John Sherry (GCC) looking at food provision across the city and stressed the need for people to use the helpline that the Council has set up – Ian will circulate details of this. Ongoing food poverty is an issue, pandemic or not.

Concerns about the COVID vaccine in relation to clients and staff were raised and discussed. Procedures for front line staff can be found on the NHS/GCC website. Fiona spoke of a nationally established plan that shows which priority group staff are in and will forward a copy of this correspondence with a link to further information.

The Chair thanked Judith for her update. Judith will provide a further progress update at the next meeting.

Agreed Actions

- Mental health theme to be a prioritised item on the next agenda.
- Ian to circulate details of the food helpline.
- Fiona to forward correspondence/link to further information on the plan that shows which priority group staff are in (in relation to the COVID vaccine).
- Judith to provide a progress update at the next meeting.

5. City Volunteer Review

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Ian reported that GCVS, Volunteer Glasgow and Glasgow Life agreed to jointly commission a consultant to carry out an independent review on the volunteering strategy in the city. The report has now been completed and has come back with 17 recommendations - the partners will meet this week to look at short, medium and long term actions from these. They will look at how to effectively govern the strategy and how to involve political leadership. A series of meetings has been scheduled for partners to work their way through the recommendations and Ian will bring a revised version back to the SRT when it's ready for discussion.

The issue of how to get volunteers for COP26 was raised. The Council is already advertising a volunteer program. Further discussion took place about the issues and challenges faced by people who want to volunteer.

The Chair thanked Ian for his input.

6. Microbriefings and Research Priorities

Des suggested that Item 6 and Item 7 be presented together. The Chair was in agreement.

Sarah explained the background and purpose of microbriefings. The aim of microbriefings is to produce 4-6 page research reviews, with the initial focus on different population groups. These will be housed on Policy Scotland/GCPH/GCC websites.

Chris spoke of the first microbriefing that's been produced (The disproportionate impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic on disabled people January 2021) and the structure of it. After the initial set of population specific microbriefings are done, the Academic Advisory Group will collaborate with the workstreams on how best to identify and meet research needs.

The Chair thanked the team for their presentation.

Agreed Actions

- Sarah's draft paper on microbriefings to be circulated.

7. Disability Research

See Item 6.

8. Action Plan Template

John explained that a request had been made for a draft proposal to show a way that each workstream could give visibility every month in terms of key messages, things that are important and calling out the link to the 10 questions. John introduced Matthew Barrett, who will provide support to anyone requiring it.

John explained the components of the action plan template. The intention was to provide a single page where all of the workstreams can provide a summary, a contact name and a key message. It's not to capture everything that's being done, but only particular things that's

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happening period by period and to give an indication in relation to the 10 questions as to which ones are relevant to that particular workstream.

The Chair thanked John for his presentation.

9. Workstream Updates

Third Sector

Ian advised that the briefing published earlier this month had been distributed. The review group has been established and have now met 3 times. The values and approach of the group are outlined in the briefing. They have agreed the 9 key areas to cover and have chosen to focus on one or two of these issues at a time. Between each meeting they will publish a draft of their deliberations for voluntary/public sector feedback - these deliberations will identify the challenges that exist.

Disabled Communities

Tressa reported on the first meeting of the workstream. The group had also been rooted in work that they were doing for the General Purposes Committee and this has now come together with the workstream.

The group discussed its Terms of Reference, values, approach, purpose and principals. Emerging themes (poverty, food, isolation, mental health) were discussed, with the main discussion dominated by access to services. The next meeting will look at structuring the agenda around the access to services and also look at what works well (what to build on) and what needs to change.

Local Employability Partnership (GPEG)

Mike related that the Steering Group is made up of a range of partners to develop the activities and is in the process of working with them to finalise delivery arrangements and put in place the appropriate governance. The projects should be up and running in 3-4 weeks. He has met with all the employability providers in the city and updated them on how the young people they work with could access the opportunities the GPEG provide.

As the funding from the Scottish Government is for this financial year only, the impact of the lockdown has meant that they won't be able to deliver all the outcomes originally outlined. Discussions are ongoing with the Scottish Government about carrying the budget forward. Also, Mike is currently going through the procurement process for the next round of the European Social Fund - the outcome of this will be known in the next month or two.

The Chair asked that Ruairi circulate information on community wealth building.

The Chair thanked Mike for his input.

Agreed Actions

- Ruairi to circulate information on community wealth building.

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10. A.O.B.

Kirsti spoke of some pieces of work she's been taking forward in relation to violence against women and the impact of EU withdrawal. She advised that the EU withdrawal is a growing human rights issue and that the SRT would play a part in it. Kirsti also spoke of issues experienced in relation to digital exclusion

11. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday, 25th February at 14:00

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Policy Scotland Working Paper

The COVID-19 Crisis and Universal Credit in Glasgow: January 2021

Dr Sarah Weakley, Research and Impact Officer, Policy Scotland

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Key Issues

End of the shock, but high need remains: As of November 2020, there were just over 71,000 people on the Universal Credit caseload in Glasgow – 88% higher than in early March 2020. This represents around 15% of all people on Universal Credit in Scotland (474,881). The majority of the increase to the Universal Credit caseload occurred between March and July 2020; since that time the caseload has stayed consistent at this high level.

Staying on for longer: One of the more worrying issues is that very few people have been able to leave the Universal Credit caseload if they started in the spring. 28,000 people in Glasgow who started Universal Credit in the spring have been unable to leave it within six months; some of these people will have been engaging with Universal Credit for the first time. Now 71% of the Glasgow caseload has been receiving Universal Credit between six months and two years. This also illustrates that people who were struggling before the crisis have, unsurprisingly, been unable to move out of poverty.

In-work crises: The pandemic has exacerbated the crisis of in-work poverty which appears in UC data, as it is a programme that serves low-income people both in and out of work. Since March, there has been a 127% increase in the number of people in Glasgow in work who have had to access Universal Credit to make ends meet. There has been a 236% increase in the number of people in Glasgow who are in the ‘working with no requirements’ conditionality group; making enough to stay above the conditionality threshold but not enough to stay out of poverty. People in low wage, public-facing sectors are those for whom the labour market crisis has been most severe, and many with insecure contracts may have not been eligible for furlough schemes. There are distinct concerns that the current lockdown period (January 2021) and the end of job support schemes in the spring will lead to even higher redundancies and income crises.

Conditionality: 44,000 people on Universal Credit in Glasgow are subject to conditionality – the highest figure on record – which includes both those out of work and those in work but whose income from work is not above the earnings threshold¹. The sanctions regime resumed in July amidst a labour market with vacancies still lower than pre-crisis levels. These low vacancies are one reason why most claimants have been unable to leave the caseload. New research continues to assert that conditionality requirements are mismatched with the labour market context and needs of claimants and that benefit sanctions are counterproductive, particularly for claimants who are already attached to the labour market.

Adequacy, debt and long-term impacts: The level of support in the UK social security system is meagre by design, with eligibility criteria very low so that people who are accessing the system are often doing so as a ‘last resort’ with very little savings or support to fall back on. If Universal Credit is the only source of income for a recipient per month, the majority of this award will go towards housing costs and the amount left for utilities, food and other essentials is therefore often very low. Longer durations on Universal Credit means that people have been living on persistent low incomes, with many households falling deeper into debt and having to go without essentials. The £20 uplift in the Universal Credit standard allowance in March 2020 kept many more families from falling deeper into poverty, but this is set to expire in April 2021 and should be kept and extended to those on legacy benefits to keep people afloat during this continued crisis period.

¹ £343 per month for a single adult or £549 per month joint income.

1. Introduction

This is the third working paper in the series on Universal Credit (UC) in Glasgow and Scotland. It uses publicly available Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) data to investigate the income crisis among low income people who access Universal Credit in Scotland during the COVID-19 pandemic with a focus on data at the Glasgow City local authority level. This supplements labour market data reported at a larger geographic scale. The data contained in this report stretches to late autumn 2020. The longer time horizon of three quarters since the first working paper allows us to see how UC caseload trends illustrate the scale of the crisis and the groups most impacted. This paper reports on these trends and considers the implications of these trends on policy and practice (Section 4).

Many researchers in the summer were concerned about the potential ‘cliff edge’ when the Job Retention Scheme (i.e. furlough) was set to expire on 31 October 2020. As a response the UK government in the autumn put into place the Job Support Scheme (JSS), which provides incentives for employers to retain staff on shorter hours. After notable policy changes JSS is now a ‘functioning short-time working scheme’², that will be able to protect some household incomes through the winter period. For firms that continued to be impacted by national and regional lockdowns, this flexibility is essential. Although this is welcome, the support provided by the Job Support Scheme (and its predecessor) has not been able to fully stem the tide of employment and income crises particularly for those who were not eligible for the scheme. This programme is set to expire in the spring, along with many other coronavirus-specific programmes of support – another cliff edge on the horizon.

The recent labour market report from the Office of National Statistics³ reported the largest number of redundancies in one quarter across the UK from August to October – 380,000 – and a net decrease in employment. This decrease is driven by falls in employment for men, especially for men who were self-employed, and for younger workers. These figures showed some signs of improvement, however, with more hours worked on average than from the lows of the summer and more people in the UK moving from inactivity to unemployment (which indicates that people are now actively seeking work). The economic crisis that seemed to be improving through the early autumn, however, will likely be dealt an additional blow with the new set of national lockdowns announced in January. At the time of this writing Scotland is amidst a national lockdown similar to the restrictions in March 2020, with the closure of non-essential retail, most hospitality and schools.

The impact of the current lockdown restrictions will not appear in the labour market and Universal Credit caseload data until next quarter. However, research during the first lockdown⁴ on families and individuals on low incomes demonstrated the increase in material deprivation, the higher household costs facing families with children at home during lockdown, and the need for people to access additional forms of support such as food banks. The people who were struggling in the first lockdown will still be facing significant challenges.

² Resolution Foundation. 2020. Sorting it out. <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/sorting-it-out/>

³ Office of National Statistics. 2020. Employment in the UK: December 2020. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/employmentintheuk/latest#employment>

⁴ There are a variety of research projects and reports that detailed the challenge facing low income people from a variety of different backgrounds and communities during the lockdown in spring 2020. While it is not possible to detail all of the research projects here, in Scotland this includes work in Glasgow and South Lanarkshire from the [Children’s Neighbourhoods Scotland project](#) from the University of Glasgow; the University of Glasgow’s [Scotland in Lockdown project](#); and Treanor’s [evaluation of Aberlour’s Urgent Assistance Fund](#). Work across the UK from the [Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#), the Child Poverty Action Group’s [Early Warning System](#) (and many more campaigns), and the [Trussell Trust](#) also provide detailed pictures of the crisis facing people in the UK. New research from the [Covid Realities project](#) and [Welfare at a \(Social\) Distance](#) speak to the challenges within the social security system more pointedly.

In 2020 many low income families drew down their savings or got further into debt as a result of this crisis⁵ – issues that are likely to be exacerbated as this crisis lingers on.

One of the common findings of research in 2020 was that while the social security system was able to adequately address the large influx of claimants to Universal Credit from an administrative perspective, the support provided by social security is inadequate to meet the needs of people in crisis. Universal Credit is a means-tested programme of social assistance and aims to be a short-term programme of last resort for people in crisis – a safety net rather than a social insurance system. It therefore has low income replacement rates, where income from social security replaces just 50% of the average disposable income from work⁶. Therefore, despite the increase in UC entitlements since March, Universal Credit payment amounts provide a very low level of income support for recipients to cover their essentials.

1.1. The DWP Claimant Count and limitations of UC data

UC data does not capture the full extent of those who are unemployed, underemployed or those economically inactive. This is due to the nature of the UC eligibility requirements and, for some, the desire to avoid entering a system such as Universal Credit. Work by the *Welfare at a Social Distance* project investigated the people who made an initial claim to Universal Credit in the spring but who were unsuccessful, and found that a majority of those people were unsuccessful due to being over the savings and asset limits⁷.

There are also people in the UK who are unemployed who access New Style Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) which is based on their national insurance contributions and can be accessed for 6 months. Additional information about the number of people in the UK claiming social security due to unemployment can be found in the DWP Claimant Count data, which includes people who receive UC in the ‘searching for work’ conditionality group and people who receive New Style JSA. Most recent figures report that in November 2.7 million people across the UK are in this group. This represents a monthly increase of 2.5% and an increase of 114.8%, or 1.4 million, since March 2020⁸.

1.2. Data used in this paper

The data used in this working paper comes from three datasets contained in DWP’s Stat Xplore system, which is publicly available⁹.

- **Universal Credit Claims:** the number of claims made to Universal Credit in one week, from Friday to Thursday. *This working paper contains the most recent data from October 2020.*
- **Universal Credit Starts:** the monthly count of people who have started on Universal Credit, measured from the second Friday in the previous month to the second Thursday in the current month. Starts are a series of statistics used to summarise the number of new claimants to Universal Credit. A

⁵ Brewer, M and Patrick, R. 2020. Pandemic Pressures: Why families on low incomes are spending more during Covid-19. Resolution Foundation Briefing Note. <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/app/uploads/2021/01/Pandemic-pressures.pdf>

⁶ Resolution Foundation. 2020. This time is different – Universal Credit’s first recession. <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/this-time-is-different-universal-credits-first-recession/>

⁷ Geiger, B et al. 2020. At the edge of the safety net: Unsuccessful benefits claims at the start of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Rapid Report #3: Welfare at a (Social) Distance, University of Salford. <http://hub.salford.ac.uk/welfare-at-a-social-distance/wp-content/uploads/sites/120/2020/10/Rapid-Report-3-Unsuccessful-claimants.pdf>

⁸ ONS. 2020. Ibid.

⁹ For additional information on all data captured by DWP and the relationship between the two datasets please see DWP. 2020. Universal Credit statistics: background information and methodology. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-statistics-background-information-and-methodology/universal-credit-statistics-background-information-and-methodology#methodology>

person is deemed to have ‘started’ if they have accepted their ‘claimant commitment.’ The count of ‘starts’ simply counts the number of people that have accepted their claimant commitment for the first time for Universal Credit in an assessment period. *This working paper contains the most recent data from October 2020.*

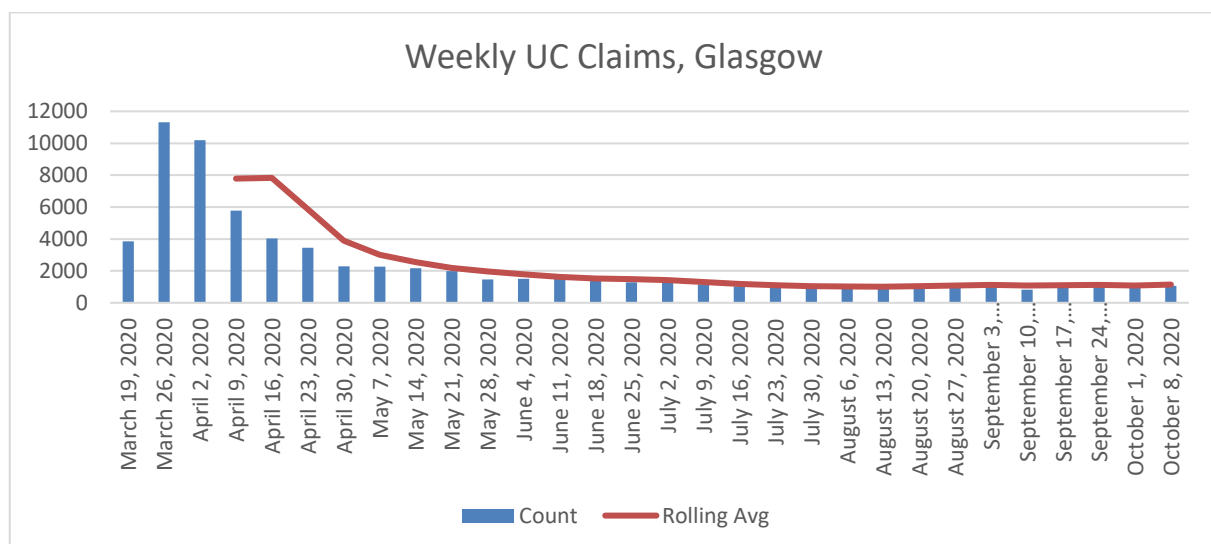
- **People on Universal Credit:** the count of people receiving Universal Credit at a single point in time, the second Thursday of every month. The People on Universal Credit data series counts the number of people who have started a claim for Universal Credit and are on a Universal Credit contract for which no end date has been recorded. Both individuals on a joint claim are counted separately but any dependants are not. This includes joint claimants living in the same household. *This working paper contains the most recent data from November 2020.*
- **Households on Universal Credit:** the count of households receiving Universal Credit at a single point in time the second Thursday of every month, which is comprised of households containing single adults and couples. Universal Credit payments are made one per household. The data used here is on the types of families that comprise the household (e.g. single with no dependents) and the average monthly UC award. Most people who are counted in the People in UC dataset are also captured in the Households on UC dataset. *This working paper contains the most recent data from August 2020.*

2. Universal Credit in Scotland

2.1 Universal Credit Claims

In the first two weeks of lockdown in late March and early April, over 40,000 weekly claims were made to Universal Credit in Scotland (DWP 2020); over 10,000 of those were made in Glasgow (Figure 1). The number of claims made from July onwards in Glasgow have remained consistent at pre-crisis levels with a rolling average of around 1,000 new claims made per week, with no new major spikes in claim activity since the summer (Figure 1). Since the week of 19 March, a total of 71,000 claims have been made to Universal Credit in the Glasgow postcode area¹⁰.

Figure 1: Weekly UC Claims, Glasgow



¹⁰ Postcode area measurement contains a slightly larger geographic area than the Glasgow City local authority, as it contains all postcodes in Scotland that begin with ‘G’. Although the majority of the postcode is comprised of the Glasgow City local authority, the postcode also contains areas of West Dunbartonshire and smaller areas of Argyll and Bute, East Dunbartonshire. North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, East Renfrewshire and Stirling.

2.2 Universal Credit Starts

The most recent three months of data from August suggest again a ‘normalising’ of new entrants onto the Universal Credit caseload in Scotland. There are now around 15,000 new starts to UC per month since August (Table 1). In total since March, just under 280,000 people have made starts to UC in Scotland.

Table 1: UC Starts, Scotland

UC Starts, Scotland (March - October 2020)								
	March 2020	April 2020	May 2020	June 2020	July 2020	August 2020	September 2020	October 2020
Scotland	14,644	103,436	71,952	25,028	19,802	14,588	15,017	15,414

Table 2 details the number of UC starts for the four Scottish postcodes with the highest number of starts since March 2020. In each of these postcode areas the number of starts to Universal Credit returned to pre-crisis levels in August. This suggests that the more acute crisis had passed by late summer (and indeed this is what labour market figures suggest) so that far fewer new people are moving on to the caseload as they were through the spring and summer. In the Glasgow postcode area just under 73,000 starts have been made to Universal Credit since March, representing around 15% of all starts in Scotland.

Table 2: Monthly Universal Credit Starts, four postcodes with highest starts

Monthly Universal Credit Starts, Glasgow (March - October 2020)									
Postcode	March 2020	April 2020	May 2020	June 2020	July 2020	August 2020	Sept 2020	Oct 2020	March – Oct (count)
Glasgow	3,919	26,812	18,635	6,629	5,350	3,720	3,976	3,932	72,973
Edinburgh	2,435	18,689	15,457	4,497	3,669	2,648	2,802	2,797	52,994
Aberdeen	1,539	8,058	7,186	2,562	1,980	1,679	1,942	2,108	27,054
Motherwell	1,159	8,272	5,206	1,810	1,479	996	1,007	1,055	20,984

Monthly Universal Credit Starts (March - October 2020)

2.3 Universal Credit caseload (People on UC)

Claims and starts data illustrate how UC use has changed over the course of this crisis and can give a sense of the scale of income shocks that have occurred since March. When viewing starts and claims data in isolation the picture looks relatively positive, as the peak of people moving on to Universal Credit has passed. However, caseload data in Table 3 captures a point in time and shows the number of people who are in receipt of Universal Credit and on persistent low incomes. Caseload data includes those who are not only new to UC. In Scotland more than 200,000 people entered the UC caseload since the start of this crisis.

Glasgow’s caseload since the beginning of March has grown by 88% to just over 70,000 people (Table 3), with the largest increases between March and July. Edinburgh has seen a sharper uptick by percentage over the crisis – with the caseload more than doubling since March. But by virtue of Glasgow’s higher poverty levels the number of people in Glasgow who receive UC is nearly double that of Edinburgh in November 2020; a local authority area with roughly the same population size. Although it is unlikely that all 33,000 people who are now on the caseload are ‘new’ to UC, given what is known about the dynamics of benefit receipt, there will be some who are interacting with the benefit system in this way for the first time.

Table 3: People on UC, 5 local authorities with the largest caseloads November 2020

People on Universal Credit, 5 local authorities with largest caseloads November 2020					
Geography	March 2020	July 2020	November 2020 (p)	% change Mar - Nov	% change Mar - Oct
Glasgow City	37,380	68,016	71,019	88%	89%
City of Edinburgh	14,425	34,948	36,735	149%	154%
Fife	21,846	35,091	35,668	63%	63%
North Lanarkshire	19,543	33,794	33,766	73%	73%
South Lanarkshire	17,466	29,670	29,478	69%	69%
Scotland	264,117	466,417	474,881	79%	80%

From July to November the caseloads increased at a slower and steadier rate, with increases between 1 – 4% month to month. It is expected that the caseloads will not experience a sharp uptick again as in spring 2020, but given the recent stay at home orders for January across Scotland and the UK we may indeed see an increase of those who may move on to UC in the winter due to additional redundancies. Detailed demographic information on the caseload is found in section 3, which starts to unpick the type of recipient, the duration on the caseload and conditionality requirements for Glasgow. These higher caseloads have implications for recipients, devolved governments and frontline services in these local authorities which will be discussed in section 4.

3. Universal Credit in Glasgow

3.1 Demographic Groups

Age

Labour market data to October continues to show that the economic crisis is having disproportionate impacts on younger workers, as they are concentrated in sectors that have been most disrupted¹¹. There is record low employment for people aged 16-24 and the fall in employment for this age group accounts for 62% of the total fall in employment across the UK to October 2020¹². While employment rates are down for all age groups, the most precipitous decline continues to be for young people. Universal Credit starts data enables us to see which age groups experienced the sharpest impacts from the current crisis and if (and when) the initial impacts subsided.

UC Starts

The majority of the UC caseload in Glasgow are between the ages of 25 and 55; therefore, unsurprisingly those age groups have the most starts between March and October (Table 4). Starts for these two age groups have receded to at or below pre-crisis levels in the autumn.

¹¹ Office for National Statistics. 2020. Employment in the UK: December 2020.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/employmentintheuk/latest#employment>

¹² Institute for Employment Studies (IES). 2020. Labour Market Statistics, December 2020. IES Briefing.

https://www.employment-studies.co.uk/system/files/resources/files/IES%20briefing%20-%20Labour%20Market%20Statistics%20December%2020_0.pdf

Table 4: Monthly Universal Credit starts, Glasgow by age group

Universal Credit starts, Glasgow by age group (March - October 2020)								
Age	March 2020	April 2020	May 2020	June 2020	July 2020	August 2020	September 2020	October 2020
16-24	825	3,907	3,963	2,047	1,962	1,078	1,130	1,042
25-39	1,737	12,389	7,676	2,474	1,934	1,533	1,629	1,594
40-55	934	7,466	4,704	1,410	983	734	796	858
55+	410	3,024	2,257	685	462	379	407	439

Young people and Universal Credit

October starts for young people are still 26% higher than start figures from March 2020, but much lower than starts in July (which were 148% higher than in March) (Table 4). One of the potential explanations for this decline in starts despite the continuing poor labour market conditions for this group is the interaction of young people with the education system. It is likely that some of the low income young people who would be eligible for UC may have entered a full time post-secondary course during the autumn¹³, and full time students are ineligible for Universal Credit if they do not have children (with some exceptions)¹⁴. Therefore young people entering most forms of post-secondary education would be reflected as off-flows from the UC caseload or fewer UC starts. Labour market data also finds a lower than predicted rise in the number of young people not in education, employment or training, but a still declining number of young people employed.¹⁵ This is also likely due to education interactions. Simply put, many young people are choosing to enter education because there are no entry level jobs for which they would have previously entered¹⁶.

The lack of entry-level or part time employment in hospitality and retail sectors also has a distinct impact on young people in education, who often use this type of temporary employment to make ends meet. Across the UK there has been a large drop in the number of people who are working while studying – down by 200,000 compared to the beginning of 2020¹⁷. For low income young people choosing to enter postsecondary education now, they may likely fall through the cracks of support from the welfare state while also being unable to successfully attain part time work. This situation has led to further calls for UC support to be extended to low income students¹⁸.

Caseload

Caseload data reports how many people in each age group are accessing assistance at a point in time (both new and existing recipients). In Scotland the caseloads for each age group increased between 75% - 81% from their counts in early March. The largest group of UC recipients in Scotland is in the 25-39 age group, with 203,600 people on UC, followed by those aged 40-54, with around 127,000 people. Just over 81,000 young people in Scotland were on the UC caseload in early November 2020.

¹³ For the purposes of Universal Credit eligibility, a person attending part-time on a full-time course is considered a full-time student (see DWP guidance document).

¹⁴ Department for Work and Pensions. 2020. Universal Credit and Students. Guidance. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/universal-credit-and-students>

¹⁵ IES. 2020. Ibid.

¹⁶ Resolution Foundation. 2020. Class of 2020: Education leavers in the current crisis. <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/class-of-2020/>

¹⁷ Institute for Employment Studies. 2020. Ibid.

¹⁸ Child Poverty Action Group. 2020. Mind the Gaps: Social security in a pandemic. (21 August 2020). <https://cpag.org.uk/news-blogs/news-listings/mind-gaps-social-security-during-pandemic>

The percentage increase in the caseload for each age group in Glasgow (Table 5) is largely consistent with the national picture save for the youngest group, which increased by 94% since March. As of November, nearly half the caseload was aged 25-39 (31,000 people) and another quarter of the caseload were aged 40-54 (18,000 people). Around 11,500 young people were receiving UC in early November, which is relatively consistent with the caseload in July. This represents roughly 12% of the population of 16-25 year olds in Glasgow¹⁹.

For all age groups most of the inflows to UC occurred between March and July 2020. Since then the caseloads have plateaued at these elevated levels, indicating that there has not been an outflow of people from the caseload en masse. Rather, slightly more people are entering the caseload each month than are leaving it.

Table 4: People on Universal Credit in Glasgow by age group

People on Universal Credit, Glasgow by age group				
	March 2020	July 2020	November 2020 (p)	% change Mar - Nov
16-24	5,963	11,350	11,545	94%
25-39	17,172	31,215	32,436	88%
40-55	9,849	17,614	18,528	88%
55+	4,403	7,836	8,503	93%

Gender

The labour market impacts of the current crisis have also varied by gender, which is also reflected in Universal Credit data that captures low income people both in and out of work. The increase in full time employees UK-wide over the quarter August- October 2020 was driven by increase in females in full time work, which was up a record 164,000 to 8.75 million people in the UK. In the last quarter the number of men in full time work decreased by 29,000 to 12.48 million full time employees²⁰. According to the ONS, the increase in full time female workers partly (but not fully) offset the decreases in employment driven by falls in part time workers (mostly women) and the self-employed (mostly men).

UC Starts

Before the crisis in Scotland, the number of UC starts were relatively equal for men and women. In April and May, however, the number of men starting on UC in Scotland was much higher than women: roughly 12,000 more in April and 11,000 more in May. Since July there have been relatively equal numbers of men and women starting on UC across Scotland. In Glasgow the trend was similar in the early phases of the crisis and since July there has been slightly more females starting on UC. This may be evidence of a labour market whose major shocks – particularly for the self-employed – were confined to the spring and summer. In total since March, just over 40,000 men and 32,000 women made a UC start in Glasgow – again, however, some of these people will have left the UC caseload after a few months if possible.

Caseload

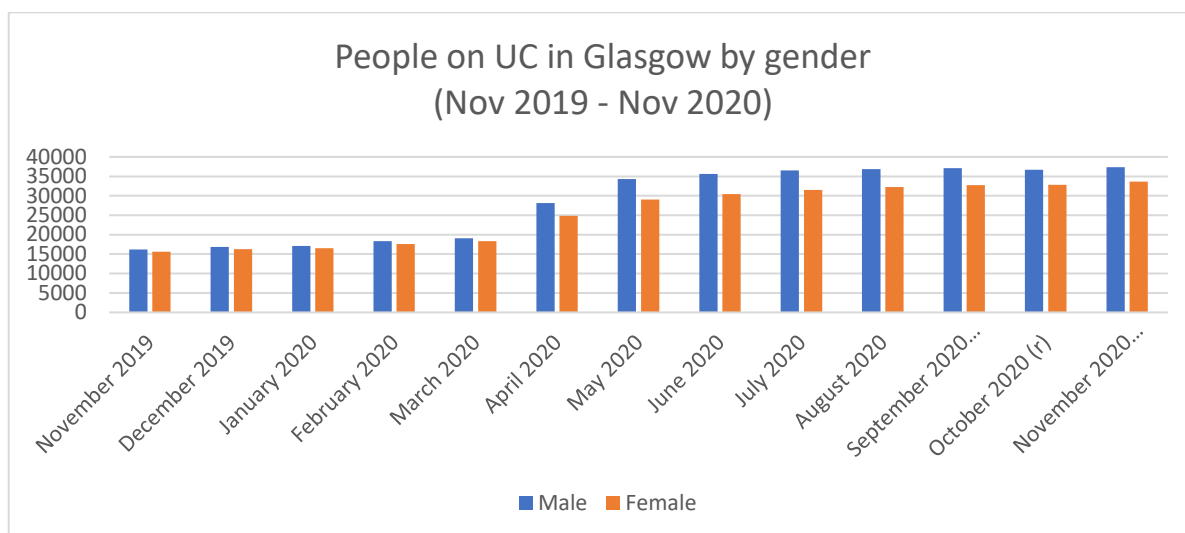
Figure 2 takes a longer view of the entire UC caseload in Glasgow by gender since November 2019. Here the gap emerges prominently in the early April measurement period and continues through the summer. The November figures report men comprising 53% of the UC caseload in Glasgow (37,336 people) compared to

¹⁹ This calculation simply used the number of people on UC in this age group as a proportion of the 2018 mid-year population estimate (accessed via ScotPHO) for those 16-25 (92,690). As the population estimate includes those aged 25, we can estimate that the percentage of young people on UC is at or slightly above 12%.

²⁰ ONS. 2020. Ibid.

47% percent of women (33,662). This proportion has stayed relatively consistent since the first UC spike in April. What continues to be unique about the Glasgow UC caseload is that it differs slightly from the Scottish picture, which has more equal caseloads of men and women.

Figure 2: People on Universal Credit in Glasgow by gender, November 2019 – November 2020



Trends since July suggests that despite decreased starts for men and women, the caseload remains consistent due to the lack of people moving off UC since April. Men in receipt of UC are more likely to be receiving as a single adult household without dependents, which also impacts the other programmes of support they are eligible for at both a devolved and local level. The types of families that receive Universal Credit is found in the 'Households on Universal Credit' dataset, which is detailed in section 3.3.

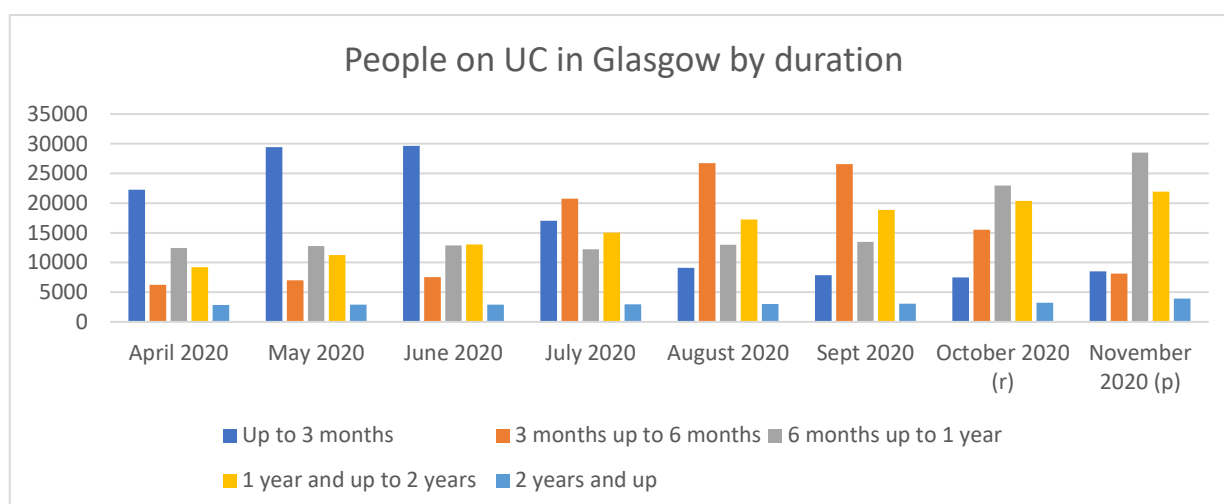
3.2 Duration receiving UC and Labour Market Attachment

Duration

Caseload data broken down by how long people have been receiving UC (i.e. duration) can illustrate whether many of the 'new' UC recipients in April have been able to exit UC or are needing longer periods of assistance. This data is one way to gauge the persistence of the income crisis facing people in Scotland and Glasgow.

Figure 3 most deftly illustrates how the caseload in Glasgow has shifted to longer durations, as the bulk of the caseload in April was new to the caseload (blue bars) and stayed on through the summer, shifting to the 3-6 month duration period by July (orange bars). The November figures suggest that the majority of the caseload is staying on, moving into the six-month to one-year duration group (grey bars). As this crisis has lingered into the autumn the information contained in these figures are perhaps the most worrying; over 28,000 people in Glasgow who joined UC at the start of this crisis have not been able to leave the caseload within six months. These longer durations buck all previous trends, where in previous years the majority of the caseload contained people who were on UC for six months or less – consistent with how the majority of people cycle in and out of poverty. The Glasgow caseload in November reports 40% of recipients in the six months to one-year duration and 31% in the one-year to two-year duration. This also illustrates that those who were struggling before the crisis have (unsurprisingly) not been able to escape poverty either. The data that comprises Figure 3 is located in Appendix A.

Figure 3: People on UC in Glasgow by duration



While it is possible to read the declining inflows to UC and the stabilisation of the caseload in a positive light, the duration figures paint a more worrying picture. The implications of a caseload – and a population – living on low levels of assistance offered by the benefit system are considered in more detail in Section 4.

Employment Status

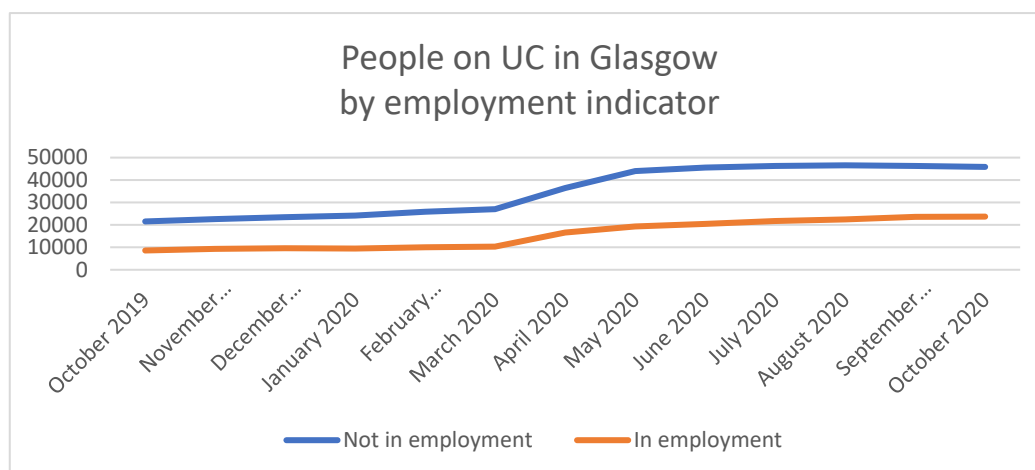
The DWP publishes a quarterly breakdown of the UC caseload by employment status, a simple indicator of who is or is not in employment in the caseload to October 2020. Universal Credit is a benefit that primarily serves those who are not in employment, and in Scotland 63% of the national caseload was not in employment in October (292,062 people, down from 69% of the caseload in March). Changes in the share of the caseload in employment is most notable. The in-work caseload increased by 112% across the country since March compared to a 61% increase in the out of work caseload. Table 5 shows that nationally those in work are the ones still flowing on to UC since July as opposed to a steady or declining ‘out of work’ caseload. This reflects the staggered opening of the economy and the decline in part time work and self-employment noted in the ONS labour market review in December.

Table 5: People on Universal Credit in Scotland by employment indicator

People on Universal Credit in Scotland by employment indicator (March - October 2020)								
	March 2020	April 2020	May 2020	June 2020	July 2020	Aug 2020	Sept 2020 (r)	Oct 2020
Not in employment	181,376	246,604	293,044	299,315	301,514	301,137	296,110	292,062
In employment	82,740	126,918	146,384	157,245	164,900	168,909	174,824	175,402

One of the small but notable differences between the Glasgow caseload and the national caseload is the larger proportion of people not in employment. Pre-crisis, 72% of the caseload was not in employment compared to 69% of the caseload nationally. The spike in UC caseload for those not in employment was particularly steep through May, with a plateau in June (Figure 4). Although more gradual, the increase in the number of people in employment on UC in Glasgow increased by 127% from March to October; now around 23,000 people on UC in Glasgow are in employment (see Appendix A for count data).

Figure 4: People on Universal Credit in Glasgow by employment indicator



The proportion of people on the caseload out of work and in work has a bearing on the number of people on the caseload in each type of conditionality regime. Universal Credit is the only state benefit system in the world that with conditionality for both recipients out of work and in work, and an increase in the number of those subject to conditionality has impacts on administrative systems, Job Centre Plus job coaches and on the UC recipients themselves²¹.

Conditionality

The UC caseload disaggregated by the conditionality regime of recipients details the type of people coming onto the caseload based on their current labour market attachment. This can help local and national policymakers understand the employability needs of those on low incomes accessing UC. However, these figures do not fully capture those working or not working on low incomes, as people do not engage with UC for a variety of reasons. This only captures the labour market status of those accessing UC.

People in the 'Searching for work' and the 'Working with requirements' conditionality must adhere to requirements in their claimant commitment to keep receiving their full Universal Credit payment. Conditionality does not apply for those earning more than £343 per month for a single adult or £549 per month joint income; these recipients are in the 'Working with no requirements' group. Uniquely for this crisis, those on furlough are still defined as 'in work' and therefore it is likely that these recipients will be in the 'Working with no requirements' conditionality group as their wages may still be above the threshold²².

As of November 2020, the Scottish caseload in the 'Searching for Work' group was 183,305; this is slightly lower than its peak in the August 2020 but almost double the count since the beginning of this crisis. This captures the extent of acute job losses across the country for those on very low incomes who were more likely to work in worst-affected sectors. The largest percentage increases in the group counts in Scotland occurred for those in the 'Working with Requirements' (+122%) and the 'Working with no requirements'

²¹ For recent evidence on how conditionality impacts administrative systems and most notably UC recipients see for example: JRF (2020) How well is Universal Credit supporting people in Glasgow; Wright et al (2020) Mental Health, Welfare Conditionality and Employment Support: Policy Recommendations and Key Findings; Wright and Dwyer (2020). In-work Universal Credit: Claimant Experiences of Conditionality Mismatches and Counterproductive Benefit Sanctions; Dwyer et al. (2019) Work, welfare, and wellbeing: The impacts of welfare conditionality on people with mental health impairments in the UK. This builds on earlier evidence of the effectiveness of conditionality and sanctions on employment outcomes in research such as Griggs and Evans (2010) Sanctions within conditional benefit systems: A review of evidence; Whitworth & Griggs (2013) Lone Parents and Welfare-to-work Conditionality: Necessary, Just, Effective?; and Watts et al (2014) Welfare Sanctions and Conditionality in the UK.

²² For a full description of conditionality regimes and their eligibility requirements see: DWP guidance document on this

(+182%) groups. In November there were just under 165,00 workers across Scotland on Universal Credit in these two conditionality groups.

In Glasgow the picture is similar (Table 6) with now roughly half of the caseload in the 'Searching for Work' category (32,203). The most notable difference in the caseload in Glasgow is also among workers receiving Universal Credit. During this crisis the type of person seeking assistance has shifted dramatically: the caseload of the 'Working with requirements' group increased by 136% to 11,683 and the 'Working no requirements' group caseload increased by 236% to 10,561. These figures suggest many low-wage workers are having to access UC due to a drop in wages that takes them below the threshold for UC.

The evidence here details the deepening in-work poverty crisis in Glasgow; both for those who are working full time on low pay, who are self-employed with a steep drop in income, those who may be temporarily away from work or who are working on temporary contracts. Although Universal Credit data does not capture the full extent of the labour market crisis for all workers, as it only captures those on low incomes, the increases to this caseload suggest that in the recovery period policy and programmes should adjust their interventions to meet the needs of a variety of 'workers' that the UC system did not engage with as regularly before this crisis. Section 4 addresses the implications of this shifting caseload in more detail.

More UC recipients than ever are subject to conditionality. Before the crisis the UC system in Glasgow primarily served those not working and those who had no work requirements (primarily due to ill-health and caring responsibilities), which comprised 70% of the caseload. Now almost 61% of the caseload is comprised of those in the two groups (working/not working) subject to conditionality: 44,000 people. The sanctions regime was paused by the UK government from the end of March to the end of June; no UC recipient would be punished via a sanction (i.e. a reduction or pausing of their UC payment) if they did not adhere to all aspects of the claimant commitment. Given the economic shutdown this was a welcome pause. However, sanctions restarted from 1 July, by which time the number of claimants subject to conditionality will have increased to over 3 million (UK-wide). While in recent years the proportion of those sanctioned has decreased, there is a distinct concern that this punitive and ineffective aspect of UC will further harm recipients in a time of slow labour market recovery.

Table 6: People on Universal Credit by conditionality regime

People on UC in Glasgow by conditionality regime (March - November 2020)							
	March 2020	% of caseload (March)	July 2020	% of caseload (July)	November 2020 (p)	% of caseload (Nov)	% increase in count (Mar - Nov)
Searching for work	16,933	45%	32,825	48%	32,203	45%	90%
Working – with requirements	4,949	13%	11,501	17%	11,683	16%	136%
No work requirements	9,239	25%	10,954	16%	12,572	18%	36%
Working – no requirements	3,134	8%	8,779	13%	10,561	15%	236%
Planning for work	891	2%	1,245	2%	1,275	2%	43%
Preparing for work	2,224	6%	2,691	4%	2,722	4%	22%
Total	37,370		67,996		71,009		

Estimating claimants with disabilities using UC data

The DWP does not disaggregate the People on Universal Credit dataset according to disability status. However, we can estimate the number of people who have disabilities on the UC caseload using this data by using the counts of those in two groups: no work requirements and preparing for work²³. In November there were 15,294 people in these two groups in the Glasgow caseload. The majority of UC claimants in Glasgow do not therefore have a disability.

3.3 Family types and average Universal Credit monthly award

The Households on Universal Credit dataset provides additional information about the UC caseload using the unit of the household rather than the individual, the unit in which UC payment is made. Data here is on the types of households by family type that receive UC in Glasgow and the average payment each of these family types receive up to August 2020.

Households on UC by family type

The Scottish Households in UC dataset in August 2020 reported just over 394,000 households on Universal Credit. The majority of households in Scotland receiving UC are single adult households without dependents, which comprised 61% of the caseload in August. The second largest group of recipients are single adults with child dependent(s), which comprised 22% of the caseload in August. The sharpest increases in caseloads since March 2020 occurred for couple families and for single recipients without children, reflecting the breadth of the income crisis for family types who might not normally be eligible for means tested benefits. (See Appendix A for full data table)

In Glasgow there are just over 59,000 households on Universal Credit as of August 2020 (Table 7). The situation differs from the national picture primarily due to the slightly higher percentage of the caseload who are single adults without dependents; 66% of the caseload in August. Families of all types came onto UC since March, with the sharpest increases (by percentage of their pre-crisis caseload) occurring for single adults and couples without children. The £1000 increase in the standard allowance eligibility criteria is likely one of the reasons why more low-income couples have been able to access UC since March, where they may have been over the income limit before. Despite increases in couples receiving Universal Credit since March, UC still primarily serves single adults without children and single adults with dependents; lone parents comprise around 20% of the caseload.

Table 7: Households on Universal Credit, Glasgow by family type

Households on Universal Credit, Glasgow by family type (March - August 2020)								
	March 2020 (r)	% of caseload March	April 2020 (r)	May 2020 (r)	June 2020 (p)	July 2020 (p)	August 2020 (p)	% of caseload August
Single, no child dependant	21,179	62%	30,467	34,674	36,503	37,979	38,945	66%
Single, with child dependant(s)	8,661	25%	9,702	10,340	10,673	10,975	11,301	19%
Couple, no child dependant	1,145	3%	2,633	3,184	3,290	3,281	3,260	6%
Couple, with child dependant(s)	3,189	9%	4,698	5,348	5,486	5,594	5,600	9%
Total	34,181		47,497	53,542	55,945	57,830	59,105	

²³ This method is not entirely accurate because of the inclusion of non-sick or disabled lone parents with children under the age of 1 and other carers in the 'no work requirements' category and the exclusion of sick or disabled claimants awaiting a Work Capability Assessment.

Average payment amounts, advance payments and the debt crisis

The £20/week uplift to the Universal Credit award amounts came into effect in the Social Security (Coronavirus) (Further Measures) Regulations 2020 in March 2020. This flat-rate increase resulted in an effective increase in maximum entitlement for a single adult under 25 of 36% on its 2019 value, and an increase in the rate for a couple with two children of 11%²⁴. This uplift is set to expire in April 2021. The continued income crisis and extended income and jobs crisis has led researchers and advocates to call for making permanent the £20 increase to Universal Credit and to extend this increase to those on legacy benefits.

Despite the increase in UC entitlements since March, Universal Credit payment amounts provide a very low level of income support for recipients to cover their essentials, a design feature of a system predicated on a buoyant labour market. In August 2020, the average monthly payment for single adults with no dependents in Glasgow was £520; for couples without dependents, £640; for lone parents, £1,000; and couples with dependents, £1,060²⁵. This average amount includes the standard allowances and any additional support in cases of disability, housing entitlement and any advance payments. If UC is the only source of income for a recipient per month, the majority of this award amount will go towards housing costs and therefore the amount left for utilities, food and other essentials is low.

Average monthly amount data gives an idea of how much support recipients generally receive in one month, but the averages are influenced by a small number of recipients with larger awards. Across the UK, more households were in the £300 to £400/month payment band than any other, with over 90% of people in this band single adults without children²⁶. The amount that people receive can vary dramatically between recipients based on the amount of income they have from work and if they are paying back any debt from advance payments. Rising debt for low income families, and debt to the DWP in particular, has become a more prominent feature in the experience of low-income families during this crisis. New work finds that across the UK 63% of households who started claiming UC in March-June had to take an advance payment²⁷, the amount of which is deducted from future UC payment back over twelve months. The average deduction is roughly £60 a month for advance payments but this will increase for larger families as it is based on expected entitlement. Tax credit overpayment is also a source of DWP debt for families on the UC caseload.

Paying back debt to the DWP makes it harder for families to budget on even lower incomes each month and pushes more families into deeper poverty, leading to calls from sources like the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee to replace Advance Payments with non-repayable grants and write off historic tax credit debt. Debt to the DWP is often in addition to debt to family members, friends, local councils and other creditors that has increased since the start of this crisis for low income families across the UK²⁸. There are also households that are currently not in payment, which means that they are on the

²⁴ Resolution Foundation. 2020. This time is different – Universal Credit’s first recession.

²⁵ Data taken from DWP Stat Xplore, 8 January 2020. Please contact author for data if required.

²⁶ DWP. 2020. Universal Credit statistics: 29 April 2013 to 8 October 2020 (Updated 1 December 2020),

²⁷ Patrick, R and Lee, T. 2020. Advance to debt: Paying back benefit debt – what happens when deductions are made to benefit payments? Covid Realities project briefing paper.

<https://media.covidrealities.org/COVID%20realities%20-%20Advance%20to%20debt%2022%20Dec.pdf>

²⁸ House of Commons Library. 2020. Coronavirus: Impact on household savings and debt.

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9060/>; Hanscomb, K and Judge, L (2020) Caught in a (Covid) Trap. <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/caught-in-a-covid-trap/>; Brewer, M and Patrick, R. 2020. Ibid.

Universal Credit caseload but are not receiving any assistance due to earnings or deductions²⁹. Of the 394,089 households in Scotland on Universal Credit as of August 2020, 59,600 were not in payment (15%)³⁰.

Taken together, data from the People on Universal Credit dataset and the Households on Universal Credit indicate a continuing crisis of low incomes for many of those in Glasgow whose lives were upended beginning in March 2020. Although the acute income crisis of spring 2020 does not look to have been repeated in October 2020 with the removal of some aspects of the furlough scheme, in January 2021 new lockdown measures in Scotland point to a crisis that will potentially deepen. The final section briefly considers the implications of the data on UC in autumn 2020 for UC recipients and low-income households, local actors and services and national governments.

4. Key Issues and Implications

This section considers the policy implications of the data and trends detailed in this paper, for people on UC and low incomes, national governments and local actors.

Living on persistent low incomes: duration data shows that many who entered the UC caseload in the spring have been unable to leave it and that those who were receiving UC before the crisis have been unable to exit. As both Universal Credit award data and other research on household income has asserted, living on very low incomes for many months means that families are often unable to afford the essentials. Recent Resolution Foundation work, for example, finds that almost one in three people on persistently low incomes say they cannot afford basic items every day or to turn on the heating when required³¹. This has resulted in a sharp increase in food bank use and the need for households to apply for emergency crisis grants from charities and (if possible) local authorities to survive. Leaders at national and local levels should assess how local crisis systems developed during the initial lockdown in spring 2020 can be resourced and improved as the country faces a sustained income crisis for many months to come. Are all people in an income crisis accessing the support they need? Are referral systems between national programmes, local programmes and third sector support working?

In work poverty, conditionality and the extended jobs crisis: The Universal Credit caseload has changed such that now many more people accessing UC are in work but their income has become so low that they need extra support. Given the resounding evidence on the ineffectiveness of conditionality and sanctions for claimant mental health and employment outcomes³², the UK government should consider if conditionality is necessary, particularly for those who are working. The nature of the jobs crisis and continued low levels of vacancies points to a mismatch between programme and policy design and the real lives of claimants. The jobs crisis for those in low wage work will likely be further impacted with new lockdowns through the winter. At a local level, leaders should consider what employability programmes need to design and offer now to ensure that when the economy recovers it is possible for people to retrain and enter high quality, well-paying work. This includes considering how the provision of childcare interacts with the location of jobs, which causes distinct concerns for lone parents.

Design flaws and the debt crisis: The last nine months have laid bare the design flaws in the Universal Credit system. The most prominent of these include the adequacy of the assistance, the initial five-week wait, and relatedly, the system of advanced payments. The £20 uplift to the standard allowance in March 2020

²⁹ DWP. 2020. Universal Credit statistics: background information and methodology.

³⁰ DWP. 2020. Universal Credit: Households. Universal Credit Official Statistics Interactive Map. <https://dwp-stats.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=8560a06de0f2430ab71505772163e8b4>

³¹ Resolution Foundation. 2020. Caught in a (Covid) trap. <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/caught-in-a-covid-trap/>

³² See footnote 21.

helped thousands of families stay afloat, but action at the UK government level is needed to keep this permanent past April 2021 and to extend it to people on legacy benefits if a further income crisis is to be kept at bay. Even with this uplift, many families are still not able to fully benefit due to deductions taken from their UC payments each month. Over 60% of families across the UK had to take an advance payment during the five-week wait for their first UC award, which then is deducted over 12 months³³. Additionally, there are just under 60,000 households in Scotland who are on the Universal Credit caseload but who are receiving no assistance. While for some this is due to earnings from employment over the threshold, for many this is due to deductions and sanctions. These debts to the DWP often lie on top of debts to family members, friends and other creditors during an income crisis: across the UK over half of adults from families in the lowest income quintile have borrowed in recent months to cover everyday costs such as housing and food³⁴. Scottish systems of support such as the Scottish Child payment, free school meal support and local welfare assistance schemes will be able to help families facing a debt crisis that are not impacted by UC deductions. However, the need for debt support services and welfare rights advice services is clear.

This Universal Credit data reported on in this working paper illustrates the increased levels of need in Scotland and in Glasgow because of this crisis. Higher caseloads will likely remain in the first quarter of 2021 and flaws in the programme design means that more people are likely finding it challenging to cope in conditionality regimes and are having to survive on low levels of assistance due to debt. It will be up to leaders at all levels of government to fill in the gaps in provision for people facing the sharpest ends of this crisis now, and work to advocate for larger changes to the welfare state to improve it.

³³ Patrick and Lee (2020). Ibid.

³⁴ Resolution Foundation (2020). Ibid.

Appendix

Table A.1: People on UC in Glasgow by duration

People on Universal Credit in Glasgow by duration, March - November 2020									
	March 2020	April 2020	May 2020	June 2020	July 2020	August 2020	Sept 2020	October 2020 (r)	November 2020 (p)
Up to 3 months	7,893	22,235	29,402	29,654	17,039	9,090	7,876	7,489	8,533
3 months up to 6 months	6,716	6,247	7,009	7,556	20,743	26,717	26,575	15,510	8,139
6 months up to 1 year	12,556	12,461	12,771	12,876	12,234	12,976	13,461	22,952	28,479
1 year and up to 2 years	7,404	9,237	11,246	13,036	15,038	17,258	18,862	20,380	21,948
2 years and up	2,814	2,851	2,902	2,928	2,969	3,036	3,083	3,241	3,922

Table A.2: People on UC in Glasgow by employment type

People on Universal Credit in Glasgow by employment indicator, March - October 2020									
	March 2020	April 2020	May 2020	June 2020	July 2020	August 2020	September 2020 (r)	October 2020	% increase since March
Not in employment	27,005	36,432	44,016	45,560	46,283	46,565	46,275	45,873	71%
In employment	10,378	16,596	19,310	20,482	21,736	22,509	23,568	23,706	127%

Table A.3: Households on UC in Scotland by family type, March – August 2020

Households on UC in Scotland by family type (March 2020 - August 2020)								
	March 2020 (r)	% of caseload	April 2020 (r)	May 2020 (r)	June 2020 (p)	July 2020 (p)	August 2020 (p)	% of caseload
Single, no child dependant	138359	57%	191228	215722	226558	234800	240498	61%
Single, with child dependant(s)	70342	29%	76788	80596	82553	84460	86341	22%
Couple, no child dependant	9096	4%	20857	24483	24651	24222	23811	6%
Couple, with child dependant(s)	22982	10%	37885	43116	43762	43766	43446	11%
Total	240776		326762	363919	377530	387256	394089	



If Not Now, When?

The Social Renewal Advisory Board Report
January 2021

FOREWORD

Many analogies have tried to capture the human experience of Covid-19 but one has particular resonance here in Scotland: **We may all be in the same storm, but we are all in different boats... and even then, too many of us are with no boat at all.**

It's said in times of crisis, look for the helpers – and we have seen incredible examples of individuals and families, public and community services, organisations and businesses coming together to respond, with a spirit of collaboration, resilience, creativity and compassion. We heard countless stories of people going above and beyond; volunteers young and old rallying to help feed families and deliver essential medicines; and organisations of all kinds working in partnership as never before to save lives and protect communities.

But alongside that civic response, this pandemic has brutally exposed the inequalities that still blight the lives of too many, limiting our ability to flourish, control our own lives and contribute our talents to create an inclusive, fairer Scotland. Disabled people, minority ethnic communities, people on low incomes, older people, younger people, and women are amongst those who have experienced disproportionate impacts, with multiple disadvantage making things even harder for many. So, while Covid-19 is still very much with us and evolving in a deeply concerning way at the time of writing, we should not wait for the pandemic to be over to learn lessons and begin to plan a way forward towards social renewal.

This report by the Social Renewal Advisory Board is, therefore, a **Call to Action**. A call to not hold back the social action which made the difference to so many lives but instead to unleash it so it can grow. A call to turn the tide on poor outcomes created – often unwittingly – by barriers in the systems that shape how our society works. A call to realise in full the change we now know is possible.

The Board was set up by the Scottish Government as a short-term group to come up with transformational ideas on how to deliver real change as Scotland embarks on its journey of renewal after the pandemic.

To do this, we called on the insight and vision of people and communities across the country. We spoke to four Poverty Truth Commission groups: “Community Listening Events” were held in 31 local authority areas; inclusive ‘Policy Circles’ met multiple times and came up with initial proposals; ‘Deep Dive Events’ probed deeper into ideas and sharpened the recommendations; and over 100 organisations provided evidence of the impacts of the pandemic and their own ideas for change. We want to acknowledge this incredible response – evidence of the collective capacity Scotland has and the desire from people to be part of building what comes next. There is no doubt the timescales were tight, but everyone understood the urgency of the task and we are so grateful to every one of you.

The Board was not set up to suggest small improvements to make some things better and some things “less bad”. We have been clear with Ministers that now is the time to accelerate system change – a call that has also been made by other key groups working to mitigate the impact of the pandemic, notably the Expert Reference Group on Covid and Ethnicity and the Education Recovery Group. We are all calling for a fair and equal society, underpinned by a strong commitment to human rights and economic justice. This is a Scotland already on its way to becoming a reality. We just need to get there faster, using existing levers and creating new enablers.

We have firm foundations – we are a country with modern, progressive politics and an established Parliament that delivers world-leading legislation. We have brilliant young people, passionate about fulfilling their potential and playing their part to make a difference. We have a vibrant tradition of communities coming together to take action, of the third sector delivering locally and nationally, of committed public servants across the NHS and all spheres of government, and of employers innovating to create jobs and support local communities.

We have seen examples of positive change. For example, the Scottish Government's commitment to a radical blueprint for human rights legislation covering all areas of devolved responsibility. The work of The Promise to care experienced infants, children, young people, adults and their families – that every child grows up loved, safe and respected, able to realise their full potential. Our commitments to “Net Zero”, recognising our role as custodians for future generations. The firm commitment from Scottish Government and COSLA to ending homelessness. The response to the ‘Higgins Review’ (report by the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery) and the ‘Logan Review’ (Scottish Technology Ecosystem Review), plus the speed of the launch of the Young People's Guarantee. A National Performance Framework that talks about “love” as a measure of success.

We are publishing this report 10 years on from the Christie Commission, a powerful, inclusive vision that has acted as a “North Star” for civic Scotland over those years: its central tenets of empowering, of shared systems that focus on prevention, and of equitable partnerships still hold true but they are yet to be delivered in full. It is more important than ever that we revisit Christie's principles and hold to them as we look to renew. It is nearly a year since the first cases of Covid-19 were reported in the UK and since then the economic positions of countries, communities and individuals have been put under enormous strain. The UK's exit from the European Union threatens to make rebuilding more of an uphill struggle, further supercharging inequalities, excluding and marginalising some of our people and communities. Renewal needs to start now, recognising that some people and communities will need extra help and support, with a refreshed ambition for social and economic change with accountability, not only an ambition to make balance sheets look better for some.

The Board's aspiration is not to produce a blueprint for a top down ‘to do’ list. The spheres of government have their vital role, as do national performance targets, legislation, regulation, guidance and delivery vehicles. But social renewal will not be real unless communities of people, of identity and of place have more say, power and influence; unless we “super-charge” how we address the structural inequalities that still hold us back as a country. We can change some things quickly, but other actions will need several steps, with clear milestones, to get there – so let's start the journey now.

If not now, when?

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SUMMARY

The Social Renewal Advisory Board was set up by Scottish Ministers to make proposals that can renew Scotland once we start to emerge from the pandemic. At the time of writing, the pandemic is very much still with us, and evolving in deeply concerning ways, but we should not wait for this crisis to be over to begin to learn its lessons. Indeed, many of the challenges facing public health have been exacerbated by the structural inequalities this report is seeking to address. We must begin to plan and to act now.

The Board met 11 times between June 2020 and January 2021 to develop its ideas. In that time, through a collaborative approach, we've been helped by nine policy groups and a wide range of public engagement activity, including community listening events across 31 local authority areas, four discussions with Poverty Truth Commissions, a set of 'focus groups' (Deep Dive events) with equality groups, and over 100 responses from organisations to a call for evidence and ideas.

We'd like to say a big thank you to everyone who took part – we hope you see your thoughts and ideas reflected in this report.

We have focused our thinking on three key principles:

- **Money and Work** – We believe that everyone should have a basic level of income from employment and social security.
- **People, Rights and Advancing Equality** – We believe that everyone should see their rights realised and have access to a range of basic rights, goods and services.
- **Communities and Collective Endeavour** – We believe that we need to work together to deliver a fairer society and we need to give more power to people and communities and empower frontline teams.

Our work has been shaped by how people and communities, government, organisations and businesses have responded to the pandemic. We've heard countless stories of people going above and beyond to protect those in need; volunteers young and old rallying to help feed families and deliver essential medicines; and organisations of all kinds working in partnership as never before to save lives and protect communities.

The need to advance equality and fulfil human rights has been at the heart of all our work. The pandemic has widened the inequalities that were already harming the lives of too many of our citizens. We are not through this pandemic yet, and its consequences will be felt for decades if we do not narrow inequalities.

Scotland has, since devolution, changed in many ways as a country for the better. We know that wholesale change is still needed but in some areas at least, our approach is building on strong foundations. In the rest of this summary, we have described in simple terms what needs to change based on the evidence we have collected. We have called these ideas 'Calls to Action', because that is what they are – they reflect the urgent need for change. You can find more information about each of them in the main report.

The 20 Calls to Action, if implemented in full, have the power to transform Scotland, focusing on the people most affected who have experienced the worst impacts. Many of them focus on changes to the systems that affect all our lives. Most of them ask the Scottish Government and/or Local Government to step up and do more. We recognise that, as a devolved administration, the Scottish Government does not hold all the levers of power and its budget is already under strain from the pressures of the Covid-19 response. Local Government has responsibility for 65% of the National Performance Framework, but faces its own financial challenges. Others – employers, NHS and the wider public sector, third sector organisations – need to do more too, but they are each facing significant demands of their own.

However, not all of this is about money – much of it is about having the right approaches, cultures and values, as well as sharing power more directly.

None of this is easy and we know that some of the response will need to be step-by-step or longer-term. But with tough times come tough choices. The pandemic has shown us just how much change needs to happen and that now is the moment for change. Because if not now, when?

MONEY AND WORK

The Social Renewal Advisory Board has called for action in five areas to deliver enough money for a decent life from paid work and social security and to reduce poverty and advance equality.

The pandemic has sharpened our focus, as a society, on the importance of a decent and secure income for a healthy and happy life. **So our first call is for the Scottish Government to commit to a Minimum Income Guarantee for all as a long-term aim.** Building on the Citizens Basic Income [pilot research work](#) done by four councils, research should look at how such a guarantee could be delivered over the longer-term – a floor below which no one can fall. This would explore what levels of income are needed for a decent life (a Minimum Income Standard). It would provide different income levels depending on individual and household characteristics, including factoring in the extra costs of living with disability, ensuring women's independent incomes, and accounting for multi-generational/extended households. As an immediate step, there should be a review of how income and services can be offered to people who have 'No Recourse to Public Funds' – those facing temporary immigration restrictions, who are most likely to be living in real hardship. We know that delivering a Minimum Income Guarantee cannot be done overnight so government will need to take a step-by-step approach to make meaningful progress.

Read CALL TO ACTION 1

Living with unmanageable debt can affect people's lives in many ways – and the pandemic appears to have increased levels of indebtedness. So high quality money advice and welfare rights, education and help are more important than ever. **Our second call is for the development of an approach to personal debt that is designed around the needs of the individual.** This includes ensuring culturally-sensitive money advice and proactive approaches through trusted partners to reach communities less likely to seek money advice, such as certain minority ethnic groups. Debt write-off schemes should be developed to respond to the build-up of unsustainable debt both before and during the pandemic. Money advice services should be defined as essential and statutory. The impacts of existing provision of discretionary and crisis funds should also be reviewed.

Read CALL TO ACTION 2

Our third call is for the Scottish Government, employers, employees and other partners to work in partnership to develop a new social contract on Fair Work. As a first step, the Scottish Government, Local Government and the wider public sector should commit to attaching Fair Work criteria to all grants, contracts and funding as standard, unless it can be specifically demonstrated that there is a reason not to do so. A 'living hours' scheme, combined with improved pay and increased flexibility of work, should be trialled as part of improvements to terms and conditions across social care, childcare and across all organisations delivering public services, before being rolled out across the Scottish economy. The public sector's wage-setting, procurement and commissioning powers should be used to drive up pay rates and terms and conditions in the care and childcare sectors.

Read CALL TO ACTION 3

The pandemic is having a disproportionate impact on some groups within our society. However, despite the significant amount of investment in the pandemic response, the action does not always appear to be designed so that these groups benefit – a point also made by the [Expert Reference Group on Covid-19 and ethnicity](#). **So we call on government and the public sector to focus Fair Work action squarely on the groups most affected by the pandemic.** Skills, training and qualifications programmes – with targeted specialist programmes for women, disabled people, minority ethnic communities and lone parents – must be designed and funded to support entry into decent jobs with progression opportunities. Childcare and social care should be designated as key growth sectors in future economic strategies. A proportion of the [Green Jobs Fund](#) should be set aside specifically so that people from areas of socio-economic deprivation, women, lone parents, minority ethnic communities, refugees, disabled people, carers and young people can train for and get Green Jobs. There must be an end to the gender segregation that exists in many sectors of the labour market, and jobs such as care, cleaning and retail, primarily done by women, need decent pay. We must strengthen help and support for unpaid carers, the majority of whom are women, who have been particularly hard hit by the pandemic. The next Scottish Government should commit to providing unpaid carers with a higher level of income that better reflects the value placed on the care they provide.

Read CALL TO ACTION 4

Childcare benefits all of us: parents, carers, employers, communities and most importantly, children. High quality childcare is a critical enabler of women's labour market participation and can help address the impact of unequal sharing of caring responsibilities. Access to enough low or no-cost childcare could offer families a route out of poverty by giving parents, in particular women, the opportunity to do paid work that aligns with their skills and experience. While we want to see all of Local Government delivering the promised 1140 hours of free early learning and childcare as soon as possible, and welcome the progress made despite the pandemic, the next Scottish Government should build on the current commitment with a radical and transformative ambition. Reflecting recommendations from other advisory boards, **we are calling for 50 hours per week of funded, good quality and flexible education and childcare for all children between six months and five years old.** This should be integrated with a funded or subsidised out-of-school care entitlement to develop an integrated childcare offer from 0-12 years, and include provision that meets the needs of disabled children.

Read CALL TO ACTION 5

PEOPLE, RIGHTS AND ADVANCING EQUALITY

The Social Renewal Advisory Board has issued ten Calls to Action focusing on housing, food, digital, human rights, inclusive communications, hate crime, and migrants' rights.

The right to an adequate home should be incorporated into Scots Law in line with the implementation guidelines on the 'Right to Adequate Housing' set out by the [UN Special Rapporteur](#). We need to understand Scotland's current position and then take the actions needed to embed this right. This is important for all of us, but most of all for those who have experienced or are at risk of homelessness, including migrants. This is also in line with the Expert Reference Group's recommendations on improving data and addressing poor accommodation and overcrowding amongst some minority ethnic communities (recommendation 13). The Scottish Government's [Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan](#) must be delivered in full and at pace, giving maximum consideration to implementing the proposals of the Prevention Review Group on a legal

duty to prevent. Where people are affected by homelessness, they must have access to safe, secure, suitable and accessible housing as quickly as possible along with any extra support if they need it. The right to an adequate home and preventing homelessness should both be made national public health priorities and integrated with other government strategies, including work to address child poverty and domestic abuse. To make sure our thinking is long-term, current work to strengthen the national plan for ending homelessness should be extended beyond 2023 for a further five years.

Read CALL TO ACTION 6

For the right to an adequate home to be successfully realised, **government must act so we have enough homes that are secure, warm, accessible, affordable, and not overcrowded, in places people want to live.** While [Housing to 2040](#) will provide a blueprint for a housing system based on equality, fairness and social justice, more immediate actions are needed to lay the foundations for achieving this vision. An initial step to increase housing supply is to map the existing stock and expand programmes that convert empty properties into affordable homes for those who need them. Addressing [Affordable Housing Need in Scotland Post-2021](#) will require a new programme for 2021-2026 to provide a minimum of 53,000 affordable homes, including 37,100 homes for social rent, designed to provide suitable housing options that are driven by local need and place-based approaches. Finally, there is a need for partners to develop a cross-cutting approach to improving quality, accessibility and energy standards for all tenures in both new and existing housing.

Read CALL TO ACTION 7

We are calling on government to ensure everyone has access to nutritious, culturally appropriate and affordable food. To deliver this, we must build on the successful partnership approaches of the pandemic and invest in them for the long-term. The use of Financial Inclusion Advisors in schools to support families with financial pressures should be expanded nationwide. Access to food in school settings should be as easy as possible, including breakfast clubs and support in the holidays, with links to worthwhile activities for children and young people. Support for local food should be strengthened by the public sector sourcing more food from local producers and suppliers. To overcome non-financial barriers to accessing food, particularly for older and disabled people, there is a need to invest for the long-term in

local shopping and meal delivery services, making more use of school kitchens and wider public sector premises that are community resources and should be available throughout the year for community use. It will be important to work alongside anchor organisations to engage older and disabled people, among others, who can often miss out on 'standard' approaches that overlook problems with access, transport, or support needed.

Read CALL TO ACTION 8

Having affordable access to digital tools, connectivity and literacy has been crucial throughout the Covid-19 crisis, but some people and some communities are still excluded. **So we call on the next Scottish Government to set a target to end digital exclusion in the next parliamentary term.** We think this is achievable, bearing in mind the success of the Connecting Scotland partnership between the Scottish Government, local authorities, SCVO, and the third sector. But more investment – and more proactive and tailored approaches – will be needed if we are to meet the needs of those furthest removed and facing a wide range of barriers, including some minority ethnic, older and disabled people. Digital access should be considered as essential for all to avoid a re-emergence of digital exclusion in future years.

Read CALL TO ACTION 9

Scotland has long benefited from strong 'universal services' – but what is considered an essential service needs to be rethought if we are to address the challenges of the post-pandemic period. We call on the next Scottish Government to commit to the principles underpinning '[Universal Basic Services](#)' thinking and practice to date. Further Scottish development work will be needed to work out the gap between where are now and where we want to arrive at. Universal Basic Services offers a model for greater financial security, with improved and expanded collective services that meet essential needs, whether delivered by the state or other partners. Services should be designed to be inclusive and address barriers faced by women, refugees, older and disabled people, amongst others. In many ways the model builds on the Scottish Government's current approach – for example, the Scottish Approach to Service Design – and there are steps that can be taken now, including development of pilots to deliver reductions in energy, travel, housing and digital costs.

Read CALL TO ACTION 10

The next Call to Action is **to incorporate key international human rights instruments into Scots Law, in line with the forthcoming recommendations from the National Taskforce on Leadership in Human Rights.** This will help address current gaps in the protection of human rights and ensure the fulfilment and respect of rights for all. These are the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the UN Convention for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (UNCERD), the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRDP) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). These, and the use of refreshed existing mechanisms, such as the Public Sector Equality Duty, offer us the potential to transform practice in the design, delivery, and resourcing of public services, the formulation of public policy and finance decisions.

Read CALL TO ACTION 11

Disabled people have seen their rights breached or put at risk throughout the pandemic. We need to acknowledge these breaches and make sure this can't happen in future. The incorporation of the UNCRDP will mean that people can take legal action if their rights are breached. **But in addition, a concrete plan of action is needed to provide further support for disabled people.** This involves making sure that social security policies support the incomes of disabled people and their families and allow for the extra costs that come with disability. It means making sure that social care proposals currently under consideration take disabled people's needs fully into account. And it means improving data collection on the wider impacts of Covid-19 and resultant inequalities, including collecting and reporting on the numbers who have died with Covid-19 who are disabled people, older people and carers.

Read CALL TO ACTION 12

We have seen the importance of clear and accessible communication during the pandemic, making sure everyone – including those who are visually impaired, British Sign Language users, and those whose first language is not English – can get the information or support they need when they need it. Public bodies should improve their approach to make sure communications are as inclusive as possible. **To address this, we call on national and local government to build 'inclusive communication' into all frameworks, including funding requirements.** The public sector and recipients of funding should have to demonstrate how they will ensure inclusive communication and accessible processes in their work.

Read CALL TO ACTION 13

The pandemic has seen increased reporting of hate crime and foregrounded the importance of tackling issues like racism, ableism and homophobia. **We are therefore calling for action to strengthen approaches to address and prevent hate crime and public sexual harassment**, which harms individuals and damages families and communities. Hate crime must be addressed for all affected groups. We want to see significant investment in preventative approaches to hate crime, based on evidence of what works. While of course we want to see reductions in experience of hate crime, we recognise it will continue to happen in the short-term. Current reporting mechanisms are inadequate, so we want to see a significant improvement in the accessibility of reporting a hate crime or hate incident over the next five years so that hate crime reporting is more closely aligning with actual incidents. We also want to see an increase in people reporting street harassment to Police Scotland whenever they experience it. Significant improvements to the Third Party Reporting Scheme are needed to deliver this.

Read CALL TO ACTION 14

We want the rights in this report to be available to all migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers. This also mirrors the recommendations of the Expert Reference Group on Covid and Ethnicity. However, all of the powers to make this a reality do not lie with the Scottish Government. In order for these rights to be realisable, the UK Government must urgently review the socio-economic impacts of the 'No Recourse to Public Funds' policy, which means that even when some migrants are destitute, they are unable to access public money such as Universal Credit. The UK Government should allow asylum seekers to take on paid work while they are awaiting a decision on their claim. The Scottish Government should clarify whether those with No Recourse to Public Funds can access employability support services and engage with employers to promote the right of asylum seekers to volunteer. It should also conduct a wider review of where existing devolved powers and services can be used to prevent and mitigate the poverty and precarious situations people in the asylum process and those with no access to public funds suffer. This could include clear and comprehensive signposting to all sources of financial and wider support that can be offered to this group.

Read CALL TO ACTION 15

COMMUNITIES AND COLLECTIVE ENDEAVOUR

The four Calls to Action in this section focus on giving more power to people and communities, empowering frontline teams, developing new arrangements for local governance, and collectively focusing our thinking, actions, and behaviours on improving places. This is not all about funding: it's about leadership, culture, values and an enduring commitment to change.

Our communities have responded to the pandemic with courage, hard graft, kindness and togetherness, and a renewed Scotland must build on this shared sense of purpose to further shift the balance of power. **We are therefore calling on the public sector to give more control to people and communities over the decisions that affect their lives. This is a central recommendation in this report.** To get there, we need increased participation, with decision-making as close to communities as possible, taking full account of equality and human rights and enabling involvement of lived experience experts in policy making, and an extension of participatory budgeting, so that communities of place and identity have more say on how public money is spent. More funding and support is needed to help communities buy land or buildings and run them for the benefit of the community so that they become self-sustaining. We also need to publicly and properly value the contributions of volunteers and take a range of steps to make volunteering easier and more accessible.

Read CALL TO ACTION 16

Another lesson from the collective response to Covid-19 has been that professional teams that have more flexibility and freedom to prevent or solve problems can quickly build trust in communities and deliver impressive results. These frontline teams are often best placed to help individuals, families and communities. **So we are calling on the public sector and other partners to improve service delivery and design by empowering both teams and the people and communities they serve.** Teams must be empowered to have more autonomy and choice, be able to take decisions and act quickly and flexibly to solve problems. Service users must be given more say in the services they receive. This means a change in public sector culture; it means a significant commitment to values-based leadership that creates space and gives

permission for people to do more within their own roles, taking more ownership of how they deliver; it means embedding agile and streamlined ways of working.

Read CALL TO ACTION 17

To build on these new approaches at organisational and governmental scale, **we are calling on the public sector and other partners to build on new ways of working, based on what has worked well during the pandemic, and to develop new arrangements for local governance, best suited to the communities they serve.**

This also mirrors recommendations from the Expert Reference Group on Covid and Ethnicity (recommendation 7). This will help make sure these changes are embedded for the long-term. Actions here include a shift towards long-term systems of risk and reward to bring about a secure and sustainable third sector. We say more about the need to improve the current model of how people are governed locally and for greater collaboration, including on the key issues of public health and health inequalities. We must make sure that the conditions are right so that communities can design and own their response. We should not expect to see a one size fits all approach across Scotland: local arrangements will be different but that diversity will be our strength and we should build on it.

Read CALL TO ACTION 18

The pandemic has demonstrated the vital importance of community, neighbourhood and local places. There has been a tremendous effort to look after people in places and to focus efforts rapidly to help those in need. To build on this, **we must look to “ground” the benefits of the Calls to Action in this report into building stronger, more resilient, fairer and healthier communities, which meet social, climate and economic equity requirements.** This means that all of us must consider how we can collaborate and focus our activities to improve opportunities and advance equality at the local level. This is as true for our island communities as it is for places in the urban central belt, whether at the village, town or city neighbourhood level, or as it is for remote and rural locations.

Read CALL TO ACTION 19

CLOSING THE GAP BETWEEN PROMISE AND PRACTICE

This concluding section of the report makes a final Call to Action on how the actions in this report can be taken forward.

Our final Call to Action is that decision-makers should commit to co-designing how we measure progress towards renewal. **This means opening up the process of assessing how we are faring, with deeper engagement with those people and communities who have first-hand experience of poverty, inequality and restricted life chances.** Essential building blocks will include asking tougher questions about how current policy measures contribute to long-term goals on climate change, child poverty, equality and human rights. There will need to be a step change in the collection and consistent use of granular data on equalities and human rights to improve monitoring, alongside independent evaluation of how far investment is driving renewal and for whom. And, 10 years on, we should recommit to the preventative principles of the Christie Commission to drive real change and ensure renewal happens.

Read CALL TO ACTION 20

SOCIAL RENEWAL ADVISORY BOARD – CALLS TO ACTION

MONEY AND WORK

1. Commit to a Minimum Income Guarantee for all as a long-term aim.
2. Develop an approach to anti-poverty work, including personal debt, that is designed around the needs of the individual.
3. Work in partnership to develop a new social contract on Fair Work.
4. Focus Fair Work actions on those most affected by the pandemic.
5. Extend free early learning, childcare and social care so all parents and carers can access the childcare they need, when they need it.

PEOPLE, RIGHTS AND ADVANCING EQUALITY

6. Incorporate the right to an adequate and accessible home in Scots Law.
7. Make sure there are enough homes that are safe, warm, accessible, affordable, and in places people want to live.
8. Ensure everyone can access nutritious, culturally appropriate and affordable food.
9. Set a target to end digital exclusion in the next parliamentary term.
10. Adopt the principles of Universal Basic Services.
11. Incorporate key international human rights instruments into Scots Law so as to deliver real change.
12. Take action to realise the human rights of disabled people.
13. Build inclusive communication into all national and local government funding requirements.
14. Strengthen approaches to prevent and address hate crime and public sexual harassment.
15. Apply the rights and entitlements in this report to all migrants.

COMMUNITIES AND COLLECTIVE ENDEAVOUR

16. Further shift the balance of power so individuals and communities have more control over decisions that affect their lives.
17. Improve service delivery and design by empowering frontline teams and the people and communities they serve.
18. Build on new ways of working, based on what has worked well during the pandemic, and develop new arrangements for local governance.
19. Focus everyone and all activities on building more resilient, fairer, healthier and stronger communities and places.

CLOSING THE GAP BETWEEN PROMISE AND PRACTICE

20. Co-design how we assess progress towards renewal, incorporating deeper engagement with those people and communities who have first-hand experience of poverty, inequality and restricted life chances.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since June 2020, the Social Renewal Advisory Board has been discussing and planning a way forward towards a renewed post-Covid future, one with genuine ambition and hope. This report, with its 20 **CALLS TO ACTION**, sets a course towards this hopeful future and asks national and local government, employers and the third sector to join forces with people and communities to help us get there.

We don't just want to 'build back better', as the recent phrase has it. We want to see a genuinely renewed Scotland, one that proactively addresses the structural inequalities that have been in place for decades. Our focus throughout has been the people and groups most affected by the pandemic and, of course, it is those who were already struggling the most who have been hit the hardest. Covid-19 has shone a light on structural inequalities, poverty and disadvantage and the disproportionate impact the pandemic has had on different people and communities. These inequalities were already limiting life chances and the pandemic made them worse. To mention just two examples, the massively differential impact of the virus itself on people from deprived areas or from particular minority ethnic communities, and the range of devastating effects on gendered and disability-related inequality that will set women and disabled people back decades if we do not take action now.

At the same time, the immediate response to the Covid-19 crisis has been shaped by remarkable partnerships across communities, volunteers, national and local government, businesses and a wide range of third sector organisations. Scotland has shown that real change can happen at scale and pace when we work together with values-based leadership, a passion to deliver positive outcomes, flexible resources and empowered communities and teams. We have all demonstrated a real desire to work differently and not to accept the inevitability of the same old failures. We have shown together that we can renew, reform and reimagine.

The speed and effectiveness of our partnership response to homelessness during the pandemic, for example, resulted in a dramatic reduction in the numbers of people sleeping rough, taking us closer to our goal of eradicating rough sleeping. Taking a rights-based and public health-focused approach, national and local government worked

with frontline organisations to ensure people had appropriate accommodation, making use of hotel and B&B accommodation as well as drawing on social and private rented sector stock. The action plan building on this response now includes a commitment to end the use of dormitory-style night shelters. Significant change can happen, even in the middle of a pandemic, so just imagine what we can achieve once the pandemic is over.

Of course, it's the case that the report has been written right in the middle of a fast-moving, evolving pandemic with many 'unknowns'.

The Social Renewal Advisory Board process

It was with a vision to harness the power of the response that the Board was first brought together in June 2020 by Aileen Campbell and Shirley Anne Somerville, the Cabinet Secretaries for Communities and Local Government and Social Security and Older people, respectively. The Board includes stakeholders from the third sector, think-tanks and universities, equality representative organisations, and Local Government to make recommendations for change that would address the causes and impacts of poverty and inequality. The full membership of the Board is set out at **ANNEX A**.

The Board met virtually 11 times over the course of its eight-month lifespan (from June 2020 to January 2021). The Cabinet Secretaries asked the Board "to lead the development of a programme for social renewal following the Covid-19 pandemic that delivers real change. The work will be outcome-led – our ambition is to form a series of proposals at pace, proposals with the power to transform Scotland."

The Board's work had lived experience at its heart. Conversations and discussions took place in 31 local authority areas. 'Community listening events' were held with local people and with four local Poverty Truth Commissions. 'Deep dive' focus groups were organised with equality groups (disabled people, older people, women, and young people). A 'Call for Ideas' asked local and national organisations for evidence of the impacts of the pandemic and their ideas for social renewal, with over 100 responses from across the country. These contributions have informed this report and inspired us and you will

see references to these engagements throughout this report, with a summary in **ANNEX B**.

The scope of the Board's work has been strongly influenced by the work of the **nine 'policy circles'** set up by the Cabinet Secretaries. These explored the following themes:

Access to Food

Addressing Low Income

Age and Disability

Communities and Volunteering

Community-led and Place-based Renewal

Cross Cutting Delivery

Financial Security

Housing System

Third Sector

The Board's work was split into two phases. Phase One was to develop immediate recommendations for the Scottish Government's Programme for Government (PfG) 2020-21 – recommendations included in the PfG are set out in **ANNEX C**. Phase Two was to develop bold proposals for renewal, beyond the pandemic and the immediate year, building on the response to Covid-19, which is the focus of this report.

Of course the Board did not work in isolation, and its Calls to Action reflect other work underway over the same period which will be central to recovery. In particular, the Expert Reference Group on Covid and Ethnicity was set up in the early months of the pandemic to understand the impact on minority ethnic communities and to inform the Scottish Government's public health response. Very quickly, it became apparent that the disproportionate impact experienced by some minority ethnic communities was a consequence of existing and deep-rooted inequalities, which risk become further entrenched by the pandemic. The Scottish Government has already provided an initial response to their recommendations, which acknowledges the importance of understanding and addressing these structural inequalities. This work will also inform the basis of the Scottish Government's response to this report.

As we have tried to finalise this report, shortcomings in the process have become clear.

In short, trying to plan and write a report about a theme as broad as social renewal, in the middle of a pandemic when everyone is already over-stretched, is highly challenging. For example, capacity issues within an organisation we had partnered with meant that the Deep Dives with minority ethnic communities were not able to go ahead as planned and we had to use other evidence instead, including the two sets of recommendations from the [Expert Reference Group on Covid-19 and Ethnicity](#) and reports such as [The Impacts Of Covid-19 On Equality In Scotland](#) and [Scotland's Wellbeing: The Impact of COVID-19 | National Performance Framework](#). Also, pulling together recommendations from nine policy circle reports has inevitably meant that there has not been time to work up some emerging ideas for inclusion within this report. But for those who want to see more detail, all the circle reports and our lived experience reporting has been packaged together in the "Supporting Files" tab [here](#).

We also know that many other areas deserve attention – but climate change, environmental justice, physical and mental health, and educational inequalities have not been the central focus of this work. All these are the subject of detailed consideration in other advisory or expert groups reporting to government (see **ANNEX D**), and ideally had time allowed, they too would have been included.

About this report

This report calls for action in 20 areas, across three main chapters. Chapter 2 focuses on **Money and Work**. Chapter 3 looks at **People, Rights and Advancing Equality**; and Chapter 4 explores issues of power, place and the third sector, via a focus on **Communities and Collective Endeavour**. A final short section looks at **Closing the Gap between Promise and Practice**, with a proposal for how we could assess progress towards meeting the Calls to Action.

The many social impacts of the pandemic have been considered in detail in reports such as those analytical papers mentioned above. Third sector organisations have provided additional perspectives on age, disability, gender, race and migration status. Our 'Deep Dives' with equality groups, the community listening events and our Call for Ideas and Evidence have also provided rich, personal and organisational viewpoints. All these have fed into the discussion that follows, in which each call for action is introduced with a

short narrative setting out the basics of what we know.

We wanted to make sure these Calls to Action could bring about transformative change. If they are delivered in full, they will. They are bold and in some cases radical. They are informed by an understanding of systemic inequalities and demonstrate deeply held aspirations for equality and social justice. Because they focus for the most part on system change, we know many of them cannot be delivered overnight, but wherever possible we include 'first steps' so action can start now. And, as the title of our report has it, "if not now, when?"

In order for the Board to think freely, this report has been developed independently. The Calls to Action are ultimately those of the Board Members and not politicians. The two Cabinet Secretaries and Cllr Alison Evison, the COSLA President, and Cllr Elena Whitham, the COSLA Community Wellbeing Spokesperson, agreed that the report's proposals should be developed independently of both Scottish Government and COSLA politicians. The Cabinet Secretaries and COSLA politicians have been informed of progress as the report has been developed and an 'Editorial Sub-Group', made up of a smaller group of Board members, has shared initial recommendations asking for views on deliverability and ambition. Both the Scottish Government and COSLA are expected to issue responses to the report at some point after publication.

Equality and Human Rights

Scottish politicians, civil society, and individuals share a vision and long-held ambition to secure legal protection of human rights and to secure the realisation of rights and advancement of equality. The international commitments of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and legislative and policy frameworks for human rights, climate, economic and social justice provide a context for Scotland and our aspirations as a progressive small nation. The experience of many during the Covid-19 pandemic has revealed the extent of pre-existing economic and social inequalities, the fragility of public service frameworks and the structures of households, families and workplaces. For women, demands of childcare and unpaid care, their employment status as segregated into occupations that have been traditionally undervalued and underpaid, the experience of

the pandemic and policy and organisational responses to it have seen women's unpaid work and division of unpaid domestic labour increase. For disabled people, the withdrawal of care and support services and the absence of consultation, involvement and communication has left individuals and families further marginalised, isolated, their immediate needs unmet and their future relationship with funded services and providers insecure. For minority ethnic people in Scotland, Covid-19 has had disproportionate impacts on their health and economic wellbeing as a consequence of racialised discrimination in employment, housing provision, and household structures.

The ambition of this report and the Calls to Action it contains is to transform these entrenched inequalities and to advance equality through securing the formal rights enshrined in international law: through new ways of working, modes of delivery, power and funding relationships between government at all levels, public authorities, public and third sector organisations and individuals. Although Scotland has obligations under more than 20 international human rights treaties, at present only the European Convention on Human Rights has been incorporated at a national level. Following the withdrawal of the UK from the European Union, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights which provides important human rights safeguards in the context of EU law, when it is applied at the domestic level, will cease to have effect. The current gaps in legislation and therefore in the integrated practice of public bodies and partners in Scotland mean that immediate action is needed to ensure the protection, fulfilment and respect of rights for individuals.

Core to the ambition of the Social Renewal Advisory Board is our vision of a more equal, just, and progressive Scotland, where individual rights are respected, protected and fulfilled in relation to international human rights law, and the policy and practices of Scotland's public sector and delivery partners. This ambition is entirely consistent and aligned with the aims of the National Taskforce on Human Rights Leadership to incorporate the international human rights conventions in law in Scotland. The taskforce is currently developing approaches of new legislation which will enhance the protection of the human rights of every member of Scottish society.

Our Calls to Action in this report are clear – to incorporate the international conventions, specifically the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People (UNRDP), the UN Convention for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (UNCERD), the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and the International Convention of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which includes the right to an adequate home.

In addition, we are clear that the existing Public Sector Equality Duty and the specific Scottish duties provide an important mechanism for enabling transformative policy and services in Scotland through integrating equality analysis, identifying and eliminate existing inequalities, and working with and through communities to foster good relations that transform outcomes for people across communities.

Furthermore, our proposals are linked to and acknowledge that Scotland's National Performance Framework explicitly recognises the obligation to respect, protect and fulfil international human rights. The commitments of successive Scottish governments to gender and equality budgeting, and the commitments to human rights budgeting, have the potential to reinforce these calls and to produce improved outcomes across diverse communities and services by mainstreaming equality and human rights analysis and objectives in the process of decision-making on public policy and finance. Improving practice in this way, at all levels of governance in Scotland, would be a very significant step towards a core aim of ICESCR “to secure the progressive realisation of rights through the maximisation of available resources” and ensure a whole systems approach to integrating equality and human rights into policy making and service delivery in Scotland.

Our Calls to Action all aim to improve outcomes for people in Scotland. By acknowledging the poor experiences, persistent discrimination and entrenched inequalities that characterised Scotland before Covid-19 struck, and committing to a social and economic renewal that aims to secure lasting change in the conditions and structures that created and reinforced these inequalities, this report makes practical and urgent Calls to Action for government and its partners at all levels, for communities and for individuals to advance.

Christie and the pre-conditions needed for social renewal

Our Calls to Action have been framed with reference to the [Christie Commission's Report of 2011](#) on the ‘Future Delivery of Public Services’. Ten years since the publication of the report, Christie's four pillars of **prevention, partnership, people and performance** matter as much today as they did then and the need to radically change the relationships between people and services has never been more urgent. Christie was shaped by the dual challenges of austerity and demographic change and its vision now – with the pandemic, Brexit and climate change – matters now more than ever. Our response to these emergencies offers a unique opportunity to radically reframe the Christie principles and make them fit for the next 30 years.

So, what are the pre-conditions that need to be in place to achieve social recovery? Here are five starter points, shaped by Christie, that government and all politicians in Scotland and the wider UK should focus on as we move towards renewal.

First, we need to stop tinkering round the edges and providing mini-pots of funding for policy responses, and focus instead on making sure people have enough money as an essential pre-condition of social renewal. We have a crisis of inequality in this nation that we cannot continue to tolerate. A crisis where sticking plasters fail to address negative outcomes. A crisis of **performance** in a system that reacts to negative outcomes rather than preventing them happening in the first place. Moves towards a wellbeing economy should be the central goal of every government. If everyone had enough money to meet their basic needs, many of the challenges of food insecurity, funeral poverty, period poverty, furniture poverty, and fuel poverty would disappear almost overnight. So focusing on adequate incomes for individuals – from paid employment supported by social security as needed – is essential to genuine social recovery. That's why we've focused some of our most radical and expensive Calls to Action on **Money and Work** in Chapter 2.

Second, we need to protect those people and groups who are hit hardest by every crisis. Throughout, we have taken an unwavering focus on **prevention**. This is one of the mainstays of the Christie Commission. Social renewal enables us to reframe and reset the challenges set out by Christie to take account of new learning, new

challenges and opportunities for change. We only have to think of the damage done across a lifetime of experience of child poverty to understand why this is a priority of government and, while we welcome the steps taken by national and local government to date, this priority needs to be backed up by a significant shift of resources towards low-income households. Linked to this, advancing equality and human rights needs to be front and centre – not just of every policy and choice – but of all thinking about the work of the government. At the moment, despite warm words and good and robust practice in many areas, this still is not the case. That's why we've focused on expansion of services and incorporation of Human Rights in Chapter 3 on **People, Rights and Advancing Equality**.

Third, **we need a new partnership between people / government / services** that radically challenges our understanding of the relationship between people and public authorities and acknowledges and addresses issues of power and inequality. Partnership needs to be based on responding to the needs of people, communities and places, building on strengths, rather than swooping in to 'fix' things, without taking the time to understand the real nature of the problem as well as what matters to the people organisations are there to help. Who develops policy with whom is one of the central questions of this next decade – one where we can radically shift what happens and how. The idea of the state – government at all levels – being the power that does things to/for people is increasingly outmoded. Many councils have been revisiting their values, culture and behaviours and trusting their citizens as they build new relationships around respect and collaboration. We want to see more of these approaches developed to shift the balance of power in favour of the citizen and some of this thinking appears in Chapter 4 on **Communities and Collective Endeavour**.

There are several themes that run throughout the report, again with links to Christie.

We need to make sure we embed the best **partnership and practice** that we have seen from people across the full range of public, third and community sectors during the response. In the midst of a pandemic, we made things happen quickly. We had a clarity of ambition and a common purpose which we need to retain. When we reflect on why we cannot work in these ways as a matter of course, the answer is clear: we can, we just need to decide to do it

and be assured that the risk of not doing so far outweighs the risks of change.

We need strong communities and a vibrant third sector, working with national and local government, to deliver the long-term change we are looking to see. It is soul destroying to constantly have to restate the needs of the third sector when it has proved so fundamental to sustaining people and places throughout this crisis. It is time to **trust** organisations to do good work without onerous requirements, in a way that delivers for and with communities. Equality and inclusion must sit at the heart of place-based working, ensuring that decision-making works for disabled people, minority ethnic communities, young and older people, and women.

We also need a strong focus on **place** itself. 'Place' is where our homes, schools, health centres, workplaces, shops, physical and natural environments, friends/family and more all interact to support our lives. A place-based approach is simply a more joined-up, participative way to deliver changes to services, land and buildings, and across sectors – all within a place. These approaches aim to bring about increased opportunities for people and communities to shape their own lives and better outcomes for everyone. As we finalise this report, we are all once again required by restrictions to stay local, shop local, and work at home where we can. The importance of good quality local facilities in neighbourhoods where we want to live and work has never been so clear. Place is where all the other Calls to Action come together on the ground and a strong focus on place is required across this report to deliver successfully.

Finally, we need to move **equality** from the margins of policymaking and service delivery to its very centre. Covid-19 has exposed that failing to deal with structural racism, sexism and ableism is literally a matter of life or death. The aim of recovery must not simply be to restore the status quo, which saw minority ethnic communities, women, and disabled people living with fewer resources, reduced or withdrawn services, at greater risk of violence, harassment, and abuse, and with less influence over the decisions that affected them. More than a decade of 'equality mainstreaming' has not brought about the change we need to see. All public bodies, including the Scottish Government, need to scale up their capacity to address racism, sexism and ableism. Public authorities should

also be accountable for their actions to realise the rights set out in international frameworks that Scotland is committed to deliver. We need to be able to demonstrate that we have turned our equality and human rights ambitions into reality.

2. MONEY AND WORK

Five Calls to Action in this section focus on ensuring everyone has enough money to lead a decent life. That approach can be delivered through a Minimum Income Guarantee, a new approach to Fair Work, and a further significant improvement to the current childcare offer.

WHAT DO WE KNOW?

The need to address low incomes is a thread that runs through this report. Covid-19 has clearly demonstrated the [deep damage](#) that living on a low income can do. Death rates for Covid-19 have been twice as high for people living in the 20% most-deprived areas compared to the 20% least deprived areas. Poverty rates for minority ethnic communities and for disabled people are both higher than for all Scotland. And the pandemic has hit some minority ethnic communities hard – for example, deaths of people from South Asian groups in Scotland have been almost twice as likely to involve Covid-19 as deaths in the White ethnic group. Where disability data has been collected, the relative difference in Covid-linked mortality rates between those disabled and whose ability was limited a lot and those who were not disabled was 2.4 times higher for women and 2.0 times higher for men.

Before the pandemic, a third of households were financially vulnerable, meaning that they did not have enough savings to cover basic living costs for three months. The groups most likely to be financially vulnerable included lone parent families, most of which are headed by women, other families with children, and young adult households. The crisis [made these existing problems worse](#).

- “Families could no longer cope with costs that they were previously, only just, able to manage. Increased food and fuel costs as a result of children being at home, and the loss of free school meals, coupled with a reduced income were considered to be catastrophic for families who were barely managing before the crisis.” – [Children’s Neighbourhood Scotland](#)
- “Many young people have been affected by financial strain that their parents or carers are feeling due to the pandemic, which impacts their own wellbeing. This can put pressure on the young people, with the concerns affecting other parts of their lives, such as education.” – Deep Dive with Young People

Personal debt [has escalated](#) during the crisis. Unmanageable debt can adversely affect people’s lives in many ways – lowering confidence and self-esteem, putting strain on relationships, causing health problems due to stress and restricting future prospects. Debt can also be used by perpetrators of domestic abuse to control victim-survivors. Therefore, high quality money advice, education and help will always be needed by people and families across the income spectrum.

Three-quarters of lone parent households were already [financially at risk](#) in 2016-18, and were more likely than average to be in unmanageable debt. Women are [twice as reliant on social security](#) as men for some or all of their income. Most asylum-seekers are in huge levels of debt by the time they are allowed by UK Government to start paid work.

Financial education was a real focus for the young people who engaged in the Deep Dive events. This is a long-standing issue – previous attempts at boosting financial education in schools were, in our view, not very effective or sustained. It is an example of the gap between good intent and patchy delivery. The need is greater than ever.

- “The young people were passionate about financial education being provided in schools, with a lack of knowledge and understanding themselves. The group expressed feelings of cluelessness and hopelessness around these issues without the right knowledge. It was also highlighted that education needs to focus on real world issues, teaching practical skills and ensuring they know how to access the right support. They didn’t feel like they currently had the skills or knowledge needed to rent or buy a property.” – Deep Dive with Young People

Young people also felt that the opening times of financial services could be difficult and were a key barrier to young people accessing vital support, due to them only being open during “normal” working hours. That is a big issue in itself – that we still think about 9-5 as some kind

of norm when it no longer exists.

So decent incomes for all are vitally important as we look to emerge from the pandemic. That is why we are calling for action on a Minimum Income Guarantee in **CALL TO ACTION 1** and, in **CALL TO ACTION 2**, for a strengthened, human-rights approach to money and debt advice.

Fair work gives workers increased financial security, better physical health and greater psychological wellbeing.

For business, it brings more engaged, committed and adaptable workers who spot challenges and opportunities, solve problems, offer insight and ideas for business improvement and create value. In **CALLS TO ACTION 3 and 4**, we appeal for a new social contract on Fair Work, and for government procurement and grant funding to do more to drive Fair Work. We call for a greater focus on the people most affected by the pandemic across policy priorities: people from areas of socio-economic deprivation, women, lone parents, minority ethnic communities, refugees, disabled people, carers and older and younger workers. Employment outcomes were unequal prior to the pandemic, and evidence suggests that these inequalities are now set to widen further. Strongly linked to Fair Work is sufficient high quality early learning and childcare. So **CALL TO ACTION 5** makes the case for extending free early learning and childcare, so that all parents can access the childcare they need, when they need it.

As a result of Covid-19, many workers have been made redundant, furloughed or have had their working hours or wages cut. Workers on higher hourly pay and permanent, fixed hour contracts are less likely to have been affected compared than workers on low hourly pay and temporary or zero-hour contracts, or whose hours vary. Fair work has therefore been a key focus for the Board.

Our Deep Dive with disabled people heard that the huge rise in remote and flexible working during the pandemic should be harnessed to have a meaningful impact on the disability employment gap. Some disabled people spoke about being able to participate in work and training for the first time in years, while others voiced frustrations about years of opportunities denied, when employers or education providers refused to allow remote working / learning.

Prior to the pandemic, less than half of disabled people of working age were in employment. Young disabled people were twice as likely

not to be in a positive destination (education, employment or training) six months after leaving school, and three times as likely not to be in a positive destination by the age of 19. The pandemic has already posed additional barriers for disabled workers and jobseekers, and a post-Covid-19 recession will only worsen this, as job opportunities shrink.

- “There are huge concerns that disabled workers are at greater risk of redundancies and job losses as employers struggle to retain staff and accommodate workers who are at higher risk from the virus.” – Deep Dive with Disabled People

A similar issue was found in our Deep Dive with Older People, with a feeling that stereotypes about older workers were affecting how employers were behaving:

- “As an older worker I feel very vulnerable. I can’t afford to retire early and because of the nature of my work I’m terrified of passing on the infection to my loved ones.”
- “Older workers were being forced back to work before younger workers on the assumption that they had no caring or childcare responsibilities which simply isn’t true.”

We must not assume that older people are not working and do not have the same caring responsibilities as younger people. That’s one reason why delivering and building on the [Fairer Scotland for Older People](#) Framework, which looks at employment issues for those aged over 50, is so important.

Minority ethnic communities are more likely to work in some ‘[shut down](#)’ sectors, particularly hospitality – Pakistanis and Bangladeshis for example, are concentrated in passenger transport and food and beverage sectors. Over a fifth of UK minority ethnic workers who were furloughed were no longer working by September 2020, more than double the overall rate. Adults of visible minority ethnicities are less likely to be employed than White adults – this is especially true for women – and may also be less likely to have access to ‘Fair Work’. Minority ethnic communities are also less likely to have savings to fall back on and may be at greater risk of the scarring effects of unemployment. The Expert Reference Group on Covid-19 and Ethnicity made a specific [recommendation](#) about the need for Fair Work practices to do more for these communities,

mentioning in particular health and social care settings, where many minority ethnic staff have been working during this pandemic.

Younger adults in employment are [more likely](#) to be working in hard-hit sectors (such as retail, leisure and entertainment) than older workers, and to be in forms of work (e.g. zero-hours contracts) that have been more susceptible to job losses. They also may face barriers to entering the labour market in the first place, with potential long-term consequences. The pandemic has led to a great deal of uncertainty for young workers in particular:

- “Financial security was seen as massively important, especially to young people right now, both directly and indirectly...they felt that their ability to plan for the future was being affected by the issues they were facing.”
– Deep Dive with Young People

Women already earn less than men on average, are less likely to be eligible for sick pay, and more likely to be in insecure work. They are twice as reliant on social security as men for some or all of their income. Women are also in the majority of those employed in many sectors that have been [‘shut down’](#) or that have been significantly affected by restrictions, particularly minority ethnic women. They were over-represented in many of the sectors where median hourly pay fell below the current rate of the real living wage where employers did not bridge the 20% shortfall for furloughed staff. More women have been furloughed than men, and for longer periods of time.

The pandemic has highlighted the need for concerted attention on the issue of women’s low incomes from social security and employment. Disabled women, minority ethnic women, and lone parents, the vast majority of whom are young women, are at an even higher risk of poverty and disruption to employment chances and good labour market outcomes. Women’s unpaid housework, childcare, and unpaid care has increased and must be redistributed if women’s equality is not to roll back. Gender segregation exists in many sectors in Scotland, and the undervaluation of ‘women’s work’ such as care, cleaning and retail is a key cause of women’s low pay. The pandemic risks widening gender disparities in pay and work, particularly for lone parents. Women are around a third more likely than men to work in a sector that was shut down during the pandemic than men. Single mothers with low qualifications are particularly

concentrated in these sectors. [Analysis suggests](#) that while an equal share of men and women in Scotland took up furlough, men have been more likely to be retained by their employers than women. Concern has also been expressed that women may find it more difficult to secure alternative employment and income streams following lay-off, due to their disproportionate share of caring responsibilities.

The Deep Dive with Women highlighted the need to do more to recognise the full value of the work that unpaid carers do. Childcare and caring roles were already unequal, with unpaid care in the home for children, older people and disabled people mostly being done by women. However, care became more challenging over the course of the pandemic, particularly for lone parents and for those who were supporting children with additional support needs:

- “The hardest part for me was trying to work from home and balance caring at the same time.” – Community Listening Event
- “In Facebook groups I see mums asking for advice and they are working until midnight after putting kids to bed so that they can fit in their hours etc. I’m really, really worried about burnout for so many women.” – Engender
- “Caring by its very nature can, under normal circumstances, present many challenges and throw a few curve balls. The lockdown due to Covid-19 has exacerbated the situation for carers, due to the loss of respite services, access to activities and support, which help to keep their caring role sustainable.” – Community Listening Event

The report now starts to look at the CALLS TO ACTION on MONEY AND WORK in more detail, setting out our aspiration – what we want to see change – and then a series of steps for delivering that change.

CALL TO ACTION 1

Commit to a Minimum Income Guarantee for all as a long-term aim

OUR ASPIRATION – The Scottish Government should adopt, long-term, the aim of ensuring that the income of everyone in Scotland meets a minimum income standard through a combination of paid work and/or social security. These standards reflect the varying needs of different groups and ensure they receive a level of individual income sufficient to lead a good quality of life. This should take full account of the additional costs of disability, the gendered nature of financial insecurity, intra-household dynamics including access to resources and the distribution of paid and unpaid work, and the distinct and intersecting inequalities experienced by different population groups in Scotland.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

1. As an immediate action on minimum incomes, the Scottish Government should review – learning from practice in Wales and Northern Ireland – how it can provide income and services to people with ‘No Recourse to Public Funds’ (NRPF) status, which disproportionately impacts minority ethnic communities. People affected are most at risk of destitution and should, like all of us, have a decent quality of life. NRPF has particular impacts for women experiencing domestic abuse and lone parents who have extremely limited access to safety nets and may be forced into destitution and homelessness. The Board agreed that no-one living here should have No Recourse to Public Funds. While that is still a possibility, we cannot deliver a fair and equal society with human rights for all.

2. The Scottish Government should consider what can be done through existing devolved powers and any further devolution required in relation to income-based social security to enable the implementation of Minimum Income Standards. The Scottish Government has already commissioned and received a [report](#) on the feasibility of piloting a Citizens’ Basic Income (CBI) from four local authorities (Edinburgh, Fife, Glasgow and North Ayrshire). This suggests that it is ‘not currently feasible for any one sphere of government alone to deliver a pilot model of a CBI’. However, a Minimum Income Guarantee – basically, an agreed minimum level of income that everyone must receive, taking into account the needs of different individual needs – may be deliverable, if expensive.

3. The Scottish Government should also undertake feasibility studies into piloting a Minimum Income Guarantee. This should consider what can be done through existing devolved powers and any further devolution required in relation to income-based social security. This should include the adoption of formal Minimum Income Standards that reflect the varying needs of different equality groups and ensure individuals receive a level of income sufficient to lead a good quality of life. This should take full account of the gendered nature of financial insecurity, how household differences – such as size or number of children – can affect it, and how people often are facing more than one structural inequality, such as being disabled and a lone parent and living in a high cost area.

Our Deep Dive with Women advised this should focus on more than just supporting people to ‘get by’: “Financial Security should be aligned with other positive outcomes and take into account the need for socialisation and a decent standard of living for all”.

Our Deep Dive with Disabled People highlighted that the extra costs disabled people face can amount to £550 per month according to the Extra Costs Commission, including “extra heating, extra transport if using taxis, extra clothes, pieces of equipment, minor or sometimes major home adaptations, care charges or sheltered housing service charges.”

One way forward with this Call to Action would be to mandate the Poverty and Inequality Commission to consider this as part of its work.

4. To make progress towards delivering a Minimum Income Guarantee, Scottish social security payments and local payments will need to increase above earnings and inflation. This should include significant increases to the Scottish Child Payment and ways to support over-sixes prior to the existing timetable of roll-out by 2022, most likely through existing Local Government payment channels. Consideration should also be given to an uplift for disabled people alongside other uplifts which have reduced inequalities and lifted people out of poverty.

5. The Scottish Government should work with local authorities to align, automate (wherever possible) and extend entitlement to other income-based support (such as council tax reduction, free school meals and school clothing grants) to deliver a more seamless Scotland-wide social security system.

6. The UK Government must consider urgent improvements to UK-wide social security, including making temporary uplifts – to Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit and Local Housing Allowance – permanent. It must extend the uplift to legacy payments which disabled people and carers are still receiving, implementing a double/triple lock on payments through the recovery from the Covid-19 crisis. It must also make urgent reforms to and/or abolish the current sanctions and conditionality regime, two child limit, benefit cap and the five week wait for Universal Credit. It should also increase asylum support in line with rates of Universal Credit.

What's the difference between a Minimum Income Guarantee and a Citizens Basic Income?

There are a number of ways of thinking about a Minimum Income Guarantee. A model being developed by the Institute for Public Policy Research Scotland (IPPR Scotland) would see a universal guarantee that everyone would receive a minimum standard of income, whether through social security, work, or both. In practice, this would see top-up payments made to people and families that need them, giving them enough money to lead a good quality of life.

The Guarantee would be based on a Minimum Income Standard, the level of income required to have an acceptable standard of living. [Researchers are already considering](#) what the Minimum Income Standard is across the UK, for a range of family types and other factors such location (e.g. [MIS for Remote Rural Scotland](#)). This work is already used to set the real living wage across the UK and as part of the Scottish Government's fuel poverty measure.

A Minimum Income Guarantee differs from a CBI in a number of ways. Firstly, a Minimum Income Guarantee would offer a universal guarantee but not a universal payment. It would provide a payment only to those who need it – those who would otherwise be beneath the relevant Minimum Income Standard for their circumstances.

Secondly, instead of giving everyone the same payment regardless of their needs, it would provide a payment based on their circumstances. It would therefore cater to differing needs and costs around – for example – disability, childcare and housing, in a way that a CBI could not do by itself.

Thirdly, a Minimum Income Guarantee could be paid on a household or individual level, to the primary carer (where relevant) or through split payments, allowing it to be a more efficient tool in tackling household measures of inequality such as poverty, and better able to take account of some of the structural inequalities reflected in the home and across society.

Finally, because it is a universal guarantee but not a universal payment, the costs involved would be significantly lower than implementing a CBI at the same level.

CALL TO ACTION 2

Develop an approach to anti-poverty work, including personal debt, that is designed around the needs of the individual

OUR ASPIRATION – We want everyone to be able to access the financial ‘shock absorbers’ and ‘safety nets’ that help people cope with unforeseen circumstances. We need a person-centred approach to money advice, financial education and help – including welfare rights, income maximisation, debt support, employment and housing rights advice and services. These services must be seen as essential parts of Scotland’s infrastructure and there to help everyone.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

1. The Scottish Government, working with lenders, energy and housing providers, local authorities and key stakeholders, should develop a person-centred approach to personal debt in Scotland designed around the individual. This would deliver a ‘new normal’ around personal debt, building on much of the good practice seen during the Covid-19 crisis so far, working to make payment breaks, improved communication and understanding, and softer collection practices across the commercial, government and public sectors’ permanent features in Scotland. It would also ensure culturally sensitive money advice and proactive approaches through trusted partners to reach minority ethnic and other communities less likely to seek money advice.

2. The Scottish Government should work with local authorities and housing associations (and potentially with energy providers, lenders and landlords in the private sector) to develop debt write-off schemes to respond to the build-up of unsustainable debt in Scotland both before and over the course of the pandemic, including in relation to social housing rent and council tax.

3. The Scottish Government, working with communities, local authorities and key stakeholders, should reconsider what are defined as essential and statutory advice services. Through the Covid-19 crisis we have seen how crucial money advice services – including education and advice around welfare rights, income maximisation, employment and housing rights – and community spaces such as libraries, and particularly those that offer digital access, have been. This should be reflected in what we define as statutory and essential services and what we ensure is funded to stay open through existing restrictions and beyond. A national approach to advice and financial education should be taken. Everyone should be enabled to access appropriate advice, whether

that is social security, housing or money advice.

4. The Scottish Government, working with local authorities, should review the existing provision of discretionary and crisis funds in Scotland, including the Scottish Welfare Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments systems. This should include consideration of additional pre-crisis funds, the balance between prevention and crisis funds, and how they can better promote financial security in Scotland. As part of this, partners should explore with representative organisations and experts by experience how those experiencing domestic abuse can always access funding to remove barriers to leaving their current circumstances and building a secure life.

Read the Financial Security policy circle report [here](#).

CALL TO ACTION 3

Work in partnership to develop a new social contract on Fair Work

OUR ASPIRATION – We are calling for a partnership approach between government, the wider public sector and employers to develop a new social contract on Fair Work. There are real opportunities via conditions within procurement, grants and contracts to improve pay and conditions for people and communities. People who can work should receive both a living wage and more certainty about the number of hours they will be working as a minimum entitlement to address in-work poverty and income insecurity. We want all employers to be active in ensuring financial security for their employees, over and above pay, hours and conditions. We want pay rates and terms and conditions for the care and childcare sectors to be improved, and additional employment support be given to older and disabled workers.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

Employment law is currently reserved to the UK Government, so the Scottish Government does not have the legal power to legislate to improve pay or terms and conditions. The Scottish Government's current approach to delivering Fair Work is built on collaboration, engagement, and using its wider powers and policies to exert strategic influence. The voluntary approach limits the scale of impact: for example, in 2019, there were 356,550 private sector businesses operating in Scotland but only 744 had signed up to the Business Pledge and only 1,874 were Living Wage employers in Scotland. While others may be offering Fair Work in practice there is nevertheless a clear gap between the ambition and the impact that is being had.

1. The Scottish Government, and the wider public sector should commit to attaching Fair Work criteria to all grants, contracts and funding as standard, unless it can be specifically demonstrated that there is a reason not to do so.

The use of new forms of targeted and conditional business support should be actively considered, as should the creation of new enforceable Fair Work obligations as a greater part of ongoing business and economic support as we continue to mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 crisis. This could be based on a reward system for those who comply and should strengthen the equality and human rights elements of Fair Work. In doing this, public sector partners should consider:

- How to mitigate against risk of favouring large organisations with greater expertise in procurement or in applying for grants.
- How to ensure there are the skills and expertise needed for more active contract management.

In addition, the Scottish Government's review of the Small Business Bonus Scheme should identify how any future version of the scheme can be linked to Fair Work criteria.

The Scottish Government should also consider how tax powers can be used to incentivise action on Fair Work by increasing costs to employers who do not offer Fair Work. Different options for doing this should be modelled to identify the most effective lever (e.g. local payroll tax, business rates supplement).

The Scottish Government should review the procurement element of the Public Sector Equality Duty as part of its wider forthcoming refresh of the Scotland-specific regulations, in order to ensure that public sector procurement plays a role in advancing equality. This could usefully link to previous work around City Region Deals done by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Finally, we want the Scottish Government and Local Government to be able to influence the UK Government's replacement of the State Aid regime – the Modern Subsidy Scheme – to ensure that its priorities include equality and fair work.

2. The Scottish Government, working with employers and employees, and key stakeholders, should develop and promote a 'living hours' scheme in Scotland, building on the hugely successful Living Wage movement to ensure people have the wage and earnings required to end poverty and narrow inequalities. The aim should be to develop a feasibility study for the first year of the new parliament. This could build on [existing 'living hours' schemes](#) led by three UK private sector employers. Living hours means employers provide the right to:

- At least four weeks' notice period for shifts with guaranteed payments if shifts are cancelled within this period.
- The right to a contract reflecting accurate hours worked, and a guaranteed minimum of 16 hours a week (unless the worker requests otherwise).

We also want to see a trial of 'living hours' as part of improvements to terms and conditions across social care, and across all organisations delivering public services. This 'living hours' scheme, combined with improved pay, increased flexibility of work, and terms and conditions, could be extended in Scotland as part of improvements to terms and conditions across social care, and across all organisations delivering public services, and taken forward as part of the Fair Work agenda.

3. The Scottish Government should partner with employers across all industries and sectors to consider what more employers can do to deliver greater levels of financial security for workers, over and above pay, hours and conditions. This could include offering routes to savings, flexible pay, insurance and lending schemes that reduce income volatility, help with costs, and promote access to savings and affordable credit.

There should also be consideration of what more could be done to increase awareness for both employees and their employers about current employment rights and what to do when these are breached.

4. Employers should do more to value older workers, disabled workers, young workers and carers and prevent these groups becoming 'easy targets' for redundancy as the economic impacts of the pandemic and Brexit emerge. Employers should be required to make adjustments where at all possible to enable disabled employees to work from home on a more regular basis. Public sector employers should be encouraged to create meaningful jobs for disabled people and one-to-one employability advice and coaching to build capacity. The Scottish Government should create an Access to Work fund to support older and disabled people's access to volunteering and work experience placements. The Scottish Government should deliver and build on the [Fairer Scotland for Older People](#) Framework for Action, which looks at employment issues for those aged over 50.

CALL TO ACTION 4

Focus Fair Work actions on the people most affected by the pandemic

OUR ASPIRATION – We call on government and the public sector to focus Fair Work actions more on the groups most affected by the pandemic – whether that is in public sector employment, training, pay setting, commissioning, procurement or investment.

HOW WILL WE GET THERE?

1. Each employability or skills programme/funding stream should be required to set out what action it will take to ensure that people from minority ethnic groups, refugees, disabled people, women, single parents, young people, older people, carers and people from deprived areas benefit from what it offers. Monitoring information must be collected for each programme/funding stream about access, what support has been provided and outcomes for these groups. This data should be intersectional and include the types of skills/training, industry/occupation for outcomes in order to measure the impact on occupational segregation. The information collected should be used to develop and refine programmes to achieve the intended outcomes. Of course, the Public Sector Equality Duty sets an expectation for this kind of analysis as part of equality impact assessment, but this analysis is not being done in a consistent or comprehensive way.

2. The public sector's wage-setting, procurement and commissioning powers should be used to drive up pay rates and terms and conditions in the care and childcare sectors. Gender segregation exists in many sectors in Scotland and the undervaluation of jobs such as care and cleaning (often seen as “women’s work”) is a key cause of women’s low pay. The Scottish Government has aimed to reduce the gender pay gap for employees in Scotland by the end of this parliamentary term and has published [A Fairer Scotland for Women](#), a strategic action plan on the gender pay gap, but there are no specific actions in the action plan to address the undervaluation of women’s work. Increases to pay and better terms and conditions in the care and childcare sectors are needed to value this work appropriately.

The Scottish Government should also ensure all skills interventions have reducing occupational segregation as a central aim.

3. To help parents, the Scottish Government should provide significant increases in funding for the Parental Employment Support Fund to tackle child poverty. Current programme funding is insufficient to make the progress needed to meet Scotland’s [statutory targets on child poverty](#). Those in receipt of the Scottish Child Payment should be helped to access parental employment support, should they need to.

In addition, an equivalent to the [Youth Guarantee](#) should be set up for parents from the [priority family groups](#) engaging with programmes supported by the Fund. This should offer a guarantee of work (with a wage subsidy provided if necessary) or funded training or education if a parent has not got a job after engaging with the programme for an agreed period. It should also include support with childcare if needed.

4. The Scottish Government should set up a scheme to help young people set up their own businesses. This will need to take into account in accessibility criteria that young disabled people may reach milestones at different ages.

5. Childcare and social care should be designated as key growth sectors in future economic strategies. This should provide policy focus and economic development support for these critical sectors.

6. The Scottish Government should designate a proportion of the Green Jobs Fund specifically for enabling people from areas of socio-economic deprivation, women, single parents, people from minority ethnic communities, refugees, disabled people, carers and young people to train for and access Green Jobs, tackling occupational segregation. This funding should be focused on people within these groups who are furthest from the labour market or excluded because of discriminatory stereotypes. The Scottish Government should set a target for representation of these groups in Green Jobs

and identify the proportion of funding needed to achieve this. It should set out how it will monitor whether the funding is being used for this purpose and how it will evaluate whether it has been delivered and its equality impacts.

7. The Scottish Government should commit to providing unpaid carers with a higher level of income that better reflects the value of the care they provide. It should carry out modelling work to look at how best to:

- Provide support equivalent to the Living Wage to working-age carers caring 20+ hours a week.
- Deliver a Minimum Income Guarantee for unpaid carers and ensure they are passported to other relevant benefits and services.
- Ensure carers are not prevented from accessing education, training and employability programmes because they are providing care.

There is minimal data on carers in employment in Scotland and this should be addressed.

Read the Addressing Low Income policy circle report [here](#).

CALL TO ACTION 5

Extend free early learning, childcare, and social care for disabled children so all parents and carers can access the childcare they need, when they need it

OUR ASPIRATION – We want to see the improvements in childcare made over recent years delivered and then taken further. Childcare benefits all of us: parents, carers, employers, communities and most importantly, children. High quality childcare is a critical enabler of women's labour market participation and can help address the impact of unequal sharing of caring responsibilities, particularly women's ability to work and subsequent earnings and pensions. Improving local childcare services is good for everyone in the community. It improves the life chances of all children – especially disadvantaged children. It boosts children's learning and gives them the chance to mix with others from a wide variety of backgrounds. Childcare can help to tackle issues of social, geographic and economic isolation, allowing parents to take up paid work or training and education, raising families out of poverty and contributing to local economies.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

1. Local Government should deliver the 1140 hours of early learning and childcare commitment as soon as possible. This was due to be rolled out in August 2020 but the duty to provide 1140 hours has effectively been put on hold for a year due to the pandemic. A number of councils are already delivering 1140 hours of funded childcare and others are aiming to provide as many hours of funded childcare as possible (e.g. once construction projects are completed). Next month, a recommendation from the Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) joint Delivery Board will be made to Scottish Ministers and COSLA leaders on when it is feasible for a national date for the duty on local authorities to deliver 1140 hours of ELC to return.

2. Set out a radical childcare ambition for the next parliamentary term. As with other advisory groups, including the National Advisory Council on Women and Girls, we are calling for an entitlement to 50 hours per week of funded, good quality and flexible education and childcare for all children between six months and five years old. In the next parliamentary term, urgent work should be carried out on how childcare can be provided more flexibly, alongside a funded or subsidised out of school care entitlement to develop an integrated childcare offer from 0-12 years. An integrated childcare offer should include provision that meets the needs of disabled children.

3. PEOPLE, RIGHTS AND ADVANCING EQUALITY

Ten CALLS TO ACTION in this section focus on ensuring that everyone has an adequate home; food to live and thrive; full and affordable access to services and the digital world and to the information they need – online or otherwise – to lead their best lives. Everyone means everyone, including asylum seekers and refugees, who have made Scotland their home. And everyone should have the power to exercise their rights, free from hate, stigma and discrimination.

WHAT DO WE KNOW?

Evidence shows that we are not keeping up with housing need. Issues such as an ageing population, homelessness, and poverty and inequality are driving demand for more affordable housing on a significant scale. The impact of the pandemic will further increase the need for affordable housing. While the ban on evictions offers some temporary protection, paying missed rent back in the future may be challenging. The number of people at risk of homelessness could increase with the economic impacts of Covid-19.

Existing studies have also shown the [negative impact](#) of living in unsuitable, inaccessible temporary accommodation, particularly for women and children and disabled people. This is supported by the lived experience examples submitted to the Housing System policy circle, which highlight further examples of domestic abuse victim-survivors either being housed in refuges which do not meet their needs or being allocated unsuitable properties. There were also reports of limited temporary accommodation options for wheelchair users. While these are only a few examples, they highlight the need for those in need to be able to access safe and affordable accommodation which meets their needs and for this accommodation to be provided as quickly as possible.

During the pandemic, particularly in lockdown, many people found that it wasn't easy to work from home or self-isolate in overcrowded housing. Overcrowded housing may be one of the reasons why minority ethnic communities have been additionally at risk from Covid-19. Poor and overcrowded housing was an issue raised by the [Expert Reference Group on Covid-19 and Ethnicity](#), which outlined the risks for some minority ethnic groups, such as migrant workers, asylum seekers and Gypsy/Travellers. In addition, the Expert Reference Group noted the need to address the low proportions of minority ethnic people in social housing, which links to the housing quality issue. The report also highlights the various housing and homeless issues facing

minority ethnic groups and suggests a number of recommendations, including the need to have reliable and up-to-date data and the need to close evidence gaps and identify solutions.

Those who lacked space found dealing with the unexpected childcare and home-schooling requirements that resulted from school and early learning and childcare closures even more of a problem, and one that again disproportionately affected women, especially lone parents and those with larger families. This was intensified for disabled women, where social care packages had been compensating for inaccessible housing, but were cut at the outset of the pandemic. LGBTI people were also less likely to have a comfortable home life, with more than one in three stating they needed to [hide who they were at home](#). Women who experienced domestic abuse during lockdown were unable to have the perpetrator removed from shared housing or to access adequate refuge or emergency housing provision.

The Poverty Truth Commission work and evidence gathered by the Housing System policy circle also highlighted the need to improve housing quality standards across all tenures, including a suggestion of minimum standards on fixtures and fittings, alongside concerns about access to repairs during the pandemic. There were also examples of the frustrations arising where tenants or neighbours had not been involved in design or planning processes and concerns about private housing developments, whereby the cheapest or easiest solutions are implemented with little engagement with those who will actually be living in or near the development.

People's access to a decent home that meets their needs is connected to the widest range of social and health outcomes. With people spending more time indoors at home during the national lockdown, the necessity of housing being affordable – including all costs, like heating – was thrown into sharp focus.

- “I have a pay as you go meter for my gas I’m struggling to keep this topped up and worry some weeks I’m not going to have hot water if [the lockdown] goes on into the colder months I worry I won’t be able to top it up for heating.” – [Dundee Fairness Commission](#)

To address these concerns, **CALL TO ACTION 6** asks the Scottish Government to legislate to incorporate in domestic law the right to an adequate home. Realising this right will require more safe, warm, accessible, affordable homes, available in the places people want to live – this is the focus of **CALL TO ACTION 7**.

Food insecurity was a challenge well before the pandemic, with the Scottish Health Survey showing 9% of adults worried about running out of food because of lack of money or other resources. Children, lone parents, minority ethnic communities, disabled people and those living in areas of multiple deprivation were identified as being most at risk. The significant government investment in food support – through shielding boxes, support for free school meals in lockdown and across the school holidays, and for emergency food providers – has been very welcome. Despite this, being able to afford food remains a key concern for many, with the Food Standards Scotland [monthly survey](#) (for September 2020) showing 18% of adults worrying about affording food in the next month, a decrease from the peak of concern in May 2020 (25%). We know, from before the pandemic, of mothers going hungry so that their children can eat. Given anticipated growth in unemployment, it is likely that food insecurity and demand for emergency food aid to continue to rise in coming months – indeed the Trussell Trust [predicts](#) a 61% rise in food bank use among its network.

How food insecurity is addressed is crucial. The need for dignity and choice in the response was highlighted by the Poverty Truth Commissions:

- “Financial support is important so people have the power and resources to purchase food and choose what they eat.”
- “Cash given to families to support purchase of food while school have been closed over summer means a lot to families. This gives them dignity and choice. They can shop where they usually shop and purchase fresh food.”

During the pandemic, non-financial barriers to food also emerged clearly, including physical and digital barriers, the availability of appropriate food, the reduced availability of social care support to access or prepare food and the resilience of local food systems to meet diverse nutritional needs, with older and disabled people being particularly affected. The Deep Dive with Older People described just how hard non-shielding older people had found buying groceries during the first lockdown and, even when things improved with priority hours access to supermarkets, one older person commented that she was made to feel guilty by other shoppers for moving to the front of the queue.

Accessing culturally appropriate food is an issue that people from minority ethnic communities who access Self-directed Support experienced before the pandemic, as a recent [report](#) makes clear. Glasgow Disability Alliance [research](#) heard these and other related problems on food:

- “My shielding packages have stopped but I still can’t physically get to the shops.”
- “There’s volunteers helping people with shopping in my area but I’ve no money to pay them, and the foodbank doesn’t deliver.”

The pandemic has shown us that working in partnership across the public and third sectors and with the private sector can deliver a partially effective emergency food response, but that there are still people who were struggling to enjoy their right to food. Many people did not get access to culturally appropriate food or food that met their medical or health needs. With this in mind, **CALL TO ACTION 8** asks government to do more to address the financial and non-financial barriers to ensure everyone can access nutritious and affordable food.

The pandemic has also shown us the real benefit that digital inclusion can bring to people and communities. The Connecting Scotland programme is a partnership between Scottish Government, SCVO and local authorities, supported by a range of organisations across the country. It has been doing a great job getting digital devices, training and support out to older and/or disabled people, families with children, care leavers and registered care homes. The programme aims to get 50,000 digitally excluded households online by the end of 2021.

Many services, like education, have been moving online, and being able to engage and communicate using digital technology is now more important than ever. However, some people may not be able to benefit – again because of affordability and skills – and a move towards online service delivery can be a source of anxiety:

- “[I have] worries about my children’s education – limited internet access means they would have trouble schooling from home.” [Scottish Refugee Council](#)
- “Digitally excluded people were disadvantaged as so much is being done online. These disadvantages also showed a lot for groups such as people with learning difficulties.” – Community Listening Event

Other barriers in accessing digital services also exist. For example, we know that older and disabled people are less likely to have access to the internet. The [Scottish Household Survey](#) tells us that 38% of people over 65 did not have internet access. Many others do not have the skills or confidence to use digital tools or may face language or literacy barriers. This has been a particular challenge during the pandemic. Our Community Listening Events and the Deep Dive with Older People drew this out as an issue:

- “The loss of activities has had a detrimental effect on the older population. Many struggled with digital technologies and there is no Wi-Fi in sheltered housing.” – Community Listening Events
- “The drive towards services like digital banking and online shopping, ultimately meaning less face to face interaction, [there is] a growing fear that technology was leaving older people behind... a loss of control over their lives was a major issue when discussing this topic.” – Deep Dive with Older People

Young people in Great Britain were [more likely to experience loneliness](#) during the early stages of lockdown. So, although many young people will have grown up with digital devices and will have smartphones, it shouldn’t be assumed that all young people, particularly young carers and those living in poverty, will have access to a device and data to keep in touch with friends and family.

Bearing in mind the increasing importance of digitalisation in our society, and to ensure that everyone can have affordable access to digital tools, connectivity and literacy, **CALL TO ACTION 9** asks the next Scottish Government to set an ambitious target to end digital exclusion in the next parliamentary term.

The pandemic has also demonstrated the importance of basic services in providing protection to groups at risk from emergencies like Covid-19. CALL TO ACTION 10 therefore calls on the next Scottish Government to adopt the principles of ‘[Universal Basic Services](#)’, to ensure as far as possible that all citizens have access to a range of expanded services to meet basic needs. The young people we spoke to highlighted this ambition as something very important to them. They saw particular benefits from access to transport and the internet as these support access to other services and opportunities, in turn supporting their wellbeing and ensuring they are connected no matter where they live. For older young people, fuel and energy costs were seen as key, with transport one of their biggest expenses, which can be a barrier to accessing employment too.

This report has already discussed how particular groups have been disproportionately affected by the Covid-19 crisis. That’s why CALL TO ACTION 11 is to incorporate key international human rights instruments into Scots Law – for disabled people, minority ethnic groups, and women, as well as on economic, social and cultural rights for all – to address current gaps in the protection of human rights and ensure the fulfilment and respect of these rights.

The pandemic has highlighted several failures in protecting the basic rights of disabled people. For example, problems in the social care system were evident before the pandemic, but became particularly acute in the early days of lockdown. For various reasons, social care packages were cut in some cases and this left people without the support they needed. This led to people going without food, medicine and healthcare, people being left in bed all day, a lack of personal care, loss of social interaction, and heightened pressure on families and carers.

- “When the pandemic hit [disabled] people had their support reduced or stopped entirely – with the expectation that family, friends and neighbours would step in – relatives were themselves high risk, or were frontline workers having to take on additional caring

responsibilities between shifts.” – Deep Dive with Disabled People

- The Deep Dives with older people and disabled people discussed this issue – both agreed that the guarantee of basic services was an issue central to their lives and that “Social Care should be at the top of the agenda”.
- “All participants were gravely disappointed that a [social care] system that had been set up to assist the most vulnerable members of society had been withdrawn from many disabled people when they actually needed it the most and all wished this to be noted from their discussion.” – Deep Dive with Older People
- The official policy was for services to be replaced with signposting and wellbeing calls to check in whether people were coping without their usual supports. However, hundreds of [Glasgow Disability Alliance] members shared their experiences during lockdown, of having care cut indefinitely, with no notice, and never received any check-in or follow up calls. – Deep Dive with Disabled People

People in receipt of social care should never be put at risk in this way again. That is one reason why, in **CALL TO ACTION 12**, we ask for a concrete plan of action to help realise disabled people’s rights in full, including an essential focus on good quality data, proper social care and adequate incomes.

We have seen the importance of clear and accessible communication during the pandemic.

Everyone should be able to get the information or support they need when they need it. However, there were mixed views about the clarity of Covid-19 communications, as our Community Listening Events heard:

- “It pains me to say it but I can’t fault the Scottish Government. They have been very good at keeping everyone informed.”
- “I work with many non-native speakers and they told me they felt very anxious because they couldn’t understand the guidance from the government.”
- “The daily briefing from the Scottish Government [was] incredibly helpful. Clear communication and helpful comments.

We need strong local messages and clear communication if we have local lockdowns.”

Good work was happening. Our Call for Ideas heard from one local authority project to provide Covid-19 Emergency Information in different languages and formats – audio, large print and other formats for people with sensory impairments; Easy Read for those with Additional Support Needs. The Mental Health Foundation, which is part of Scottish Refugee Council’s online forum for community groups, used its funding to translate specific guidance related to Covid-19 into Welsh, Arabic, Tigrinya, Farsi, Somali, French and Urdu. This resource is free on their website and contains information on mental health tips, support when working from home, and how to look after your mental health coming out of lockdown.

But there was not a consistent picture. Glasgow Disability Alliance members highlighted the lack of accessible information and inclusive communications during the pandemic. Members shared examples of local authorities and housing associations repeatedly refusing or failing to provide accessible information, to the extent that disabled people have been pushed into debt. More action was felt to be needed to address this:

- “Services and facilities across all sectors need capacity building and incentives to make their information accessible and inclusive, as this is the first hurdle to disabled people being able to access them.” – Deep Dive with Disabled People

That’s why, in **CALL TO ACTION 13**, we call on national and local government to build ‘inclusive communication’ into all frameworks, including funding requirements, to ensure that all those with specific communication needs – some from minority ethnic groups, some older and some disabled people – have those needs met.

CALL TO ACTION 14 calls for strengthened action to address and prevent hate crime and public sexual harassment. In the period from April to June 2020, the number of hate crimes reported in Scotland was 5% higher than at the same time the previous year, with the increase showing from mid-May. An increased reliance on social media may also have had negative impacts. Young people in Scotland aged 12-24 found that almost six in 10 had seen prejudicial posts, comments and/or attitudes increase online and more than four in 10 had seen

more racism. More than one third reported an increase in homophobic material, with higher rates of online bullying and prejudice perceived by LGBTI respondents. There has also been a reported increase in hate crime towards disabled people from a number of Disabled People's Organisations, because of some disabled people being unable to wear a mask.

CALL TO ACTION 15 calls for the rights in this report to be available to all migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers. The pandemic has brought into sharp focus the devastating consequences of the UK Government's 'No Recourse to Public Funds' (NRPF) policy, which means that even when some migrants are destitute, the state cannot give them public money.

- "Many families [with NRPF] from the [minority ethnic] community relied on the income coming from their employment as they are not eligible for benefits. These groups of people were not protected from contracting Covid-19 or preventing the spread of the virus when infected." – PTC Report

No Recourse to Public Funds is an area that the Expert Reference Group on Covid-19 and Ethnicity commented on, noting that the Scottish Government should review the nature of the restrictions, and produce a strategy within those restrictions which can navigate how they can be overcome.

The human rights situation for refugees and asylum seekers is difficult and will worsen with recent changes at the UK level to the Immigration Rules and the Sovereign Borders Bill. This is a population with high levels of mental health need stemming from forced displacement and a UK asylum system characterised by persistent delays in making early decisions that result in good-quality outcomes. Whilst waiting, asylum seekers are left in severe poverty with very few routes out. Their economic and social human rights are undermined because the UK asylum system: a) prohibits work; b) gives financial support at half the value of social security minimum; and c) provides accommodation, increasingly institutional, often of poor standard and in the most deprived areas in the UK under the dispersal system. In general, there is no or little realisation of human rights for asylum seekers and refugees in the UK. This is most acute in the asylum system, but it is common also for those in resettlement schemes, especially in terms of high levels of unemployment and isolation. Direct funding, devolved and local government control over asylum or resettlement programmes, and the involvement of charities and communities are needed if real progress is to be made for asylum seekers and refugees in the UK.

We now go into more detail about each of these CALLS TO ACTION on PEOPLE, RIGHTS AND ADVANCING EQUALITY, beginning with four essentials that everyone should always have an adequate home, food that's nutritious and affordable, digital access and participation, and a guarantee of basic services for all.

CALL TO ACTION 6

Incorporate the right to an adequate and accessible home in Scots law

OUR ASPIRATION – The right to an adequate and accessible home should be enshrined in domestic law in line with the implementation guidelines on the ‘Right to Adequate Housing’ set out by the [UN Special Rapporteur](#). This is important for all of us, but most of all for those who have experienced or are at risk of homelessness, including migrants and those people, predominantly women, affected by domestic abuse. We need to understand and respond to the circumstances that can threaten that right for women and people who are older, disabled, or from minority ethnic communities.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

1. Conduct a systematic analysis of Scotland's current position and then take the actions needed to embed this right. A commitment in the Scottish Government's [Housing to 2040](#) strategy will be welcome. As a first step to achieve these ambitions, government needs to conduct a systematic analysis of the current position of Scotland against its aspiration to make the right to an adequate home a recognised human right. The former UN Special Rapporteur on the [right to adequate housing](#) set out clearly the 16 steps to be taken to establish and embed this right. We recommend this is used by the Scottish Government and all partners working together to benchmark the current position and commit to a route map of actions that lead to the establishment of the right to an adequate home in Scottish law. A key consideration here will be how the right to an adequate home in practice can advance equality – for example, it should ensure that a gender analysis is included in that process and particularly for defining security, peace and dignity in the home. Reliable and up-to-date data for minority ethnic communities, in line with the recommendations of the [Expert Reference Group on COVID-19 and Ethnicity](#), will also be needed.

2. Make the prevention and ending of homelessness a national priority for the next parliamentary term. National and local government and the third sector have shown great commitment to the implementation of the plan to [end homelessness](#). All elements of the plan must be delivered in full and at pace, giving full consideration to implementing the proposals of the [Prevention Review Group](#) on a legal duty to prevent. Where people are affected

by homelessness, they must have access to stable, secure, suitable and accessible housing as quickly as possible along with any extra support if they need it. Preventing homelessness, including women's ‘hidden’ homelessness, and the right to an adequate home should both be made national public health priorities and integrated with other government strategies including work to address child poverty and domestic abuse. To make sure our thinking is long-term, current work to strengthen the national plan for ending homelessness should be extended beyond 2023 for a further five years.

3. Address gaps in financial housing support. The Scottish Government and partners should identify gaps in financial housing support and provide adequate resources to address these gaps. This should identify the groups who are most disadvantaged by the current system or likely to face the most severe financial impacts of the pandemic. This may include those who are in or at risk of rent arrears, private-renters in high-cost areas, fuel poor households, victims-survivors of domestic abuse, low income families, students, young people, disabled people, minority ethnic workers, the self-employed, Gypsy/Travellers and those with ‘No Recourse to Public Funds’. In line with the Calls to Action in the Money and Work chapter, this will require a combination of:

- working with the UK Government to consider further flexibilities for social security in Scotland (e.g. review of Local Housing Allowance rates)
- maximising existing social security flexibilities in Scotland (e.g. Discretionary Housing Payments, Scottish Welfare Fund)

- developing new financial support mechanisms to support vulnerable groups (e.g. funds for 'move in ready' homes, tenant hardship grant, bundle packages for utilities)

CALL TO ACTION 7

Make sure there are enough safe, warm, accessible and affordable homes in places people want to live

OUR ASPIRATION – Everyone should have access to an affordable home that meets their needs. Our vision is that the housing system provides the right home, for the right person, in the right place, at the right time. This means that there must be enough homes and that they are secure, warm, accessible, affordable, and with enough space for everyone, in the places where people want to live.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

The pandemic has shown us that homes not only make lives, they save lives. Scotland has a strong track-record of providing affordable, accessible, high quality homes for those in the most need and we need to build on this success. We also need to ensure we deliver successful places and communities which meet peoples' needs (see Call to Action 18 for further proposals on place-based approaches). The work of the [Housing System policy circle](#) provides more detail and some longer-term proposals on how this can be achieved in a way that reflects the Board's principles of equality, fairness and social justice. This work is feeding into and influencing the Scottish Government's [Housing to 2040](#) plan which will be published shortly and which will provide the blueprint for the future of a housing system in Scotland.

To achieve the right to an adequate home and respond to what people are telling us, specific actions are:

1. Address housing affordability. As well as ensuring that help from financial support mechanisms, including social security, are in place to meet housing need and establishing a clear framework for assessing housing affordability, improved data collection is needed on rent levels in the Private Rented Sector (PRS). This would help set up Rent Pressure Zones, where they are needed, to tackle excessive rent increases in local areas.

2. Increase housing availability. Partners should commit to fully using the existing housing stock to increase availability and provide accessible homes for as many people as possible. This could be achieved through a substantial and accelerated programme of acquisitions in the second-hand market, targeted according to need. This should also include provisions to map the existing stock and resources to convert empty homes in all

sectors back into use as affordable homes.

3. Commit to long-term planning and investment.

Government should develop a new National Housing Strategy which delivers both the supply of housing and the broader vision of a well-functioning housing system for Housing to 2040. Addressing [Affordable Housing Need in Scotland Post-2021](#) will also require a new programme for 2021–2026 to provide a minimum of 53,000 affordable homes, including 37,100 homes for social rent, designed to provide suitable housing options which are driven by local need and place-based approaches, as well as reducing inequalities in access for disproportionately disadvantaged groups.

4. Improve standards and guidance. Partners should develop a cross-cutting approach to improving quality, accessibility and energy standards for all tenures in both new and existing housing. This should involve working with national representative bodies to assess the cumulative impact of regulatory, legislative and compliance requirements (e.g. Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing post-2020, Scottish Energy Efficiency Private Rented Sector Regulations) and their impact on rent levels, affordability and fuel poverty, ensuring that these offer positive outcomes for tenants and communities.

5. Ensure communities are at the heart of planning and placemaking policies

Homes play a vital role in placemaking and we need to build communities with the services and facilities, including housing, which communities themselves design while making sure these are locally sustainable and resilient. Local authorities should be appropriately resourced to enact new Planning legislation and ensure individuals and communities are able to meaningfully participate in decision-making and Local Place Plans (see Call to Action 18). The forthcoming National

Planning Framework (NPF4) should elevate the importance of placemaking, including housing quality and location of housing (taking into effect its energy use implications through transport).

CALL TO ACTION 8

Ensure everyone can access nutritious, culturally appropriate and affordable food

OUR ASPIRATION - Scotland should take active steps to achieve the [UN Sustainable Development Goal](#) to end hunger, which commits us to integrated approaches that respond to the multiple, interconnected causes of hunger and malnutrition. This means that everyone should have a sustainable and secure income that protects them from food insecurity. Where financial hardship does occur, cash-based support should be readily available so that food aid is rarely required. A multi-sectoral approach should be in place to meet households' whole and diverse needs - financial, material and social - with dignity, aiming to prevent future crisis. This includes support for those older and disabled people who have particular access needs. Action to tackle food insecurity seeks to build local food resilience in partnership, including through public sector and community food. Scotland's recovery from the pandemic requires fit and healthy citizens - it's important for public health that all have fair and equal access to good nutrition.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

1. Invest in local food partnership working. Local food partnerships have been essential to the pandemic response. We need to build on this, with a multi-sectoral approach to developing and strengthening referral pathways, responding to food insecurity in a dignified whole-person way, and improving food access with a view to reducing the need for food aid and preventing future crisis.

To deliver successful partnerships will require ongoing flexible investment, guidance and a culture of shared practice and continuous improvement that helps us towards dignified food access. We have seen good practice on food provision for those whose circumstances require direct delivery in our communities that needs to continue and be strengthened. Dignified access to food - whether as parcels, shopping, hot or pre-prepared meals that are tailored to need - should include an opportunity for social and cultural participation and access to wider support where needed. Partners should be working with communities to connect activities, establishing robust referral pathways between community food organisations, advice services, the Scottish Welfare Fund and other support services to meet whole needs. This should include those groups, like disabled people, who routinely miss out on community responses. Crisis support should continue to be delivered as cash wherever possible to reduce the need for food aid. We also think there's a need to encourage proactive, preventative income support, such as Moray's Flexible Food Fund - see case study box.

CASE STUDY: Moray's Flexible Food Fund (FFF) aims to provide financial support to individuals and families finding it difficult to afford food during the Covid-19 crisis. FFF payments are a monthly contribution towards food costs based on the size of the household. The fund is administered by the council's Benefits Service via their Money Advice Moray (MAM) team. This approach allows the FFF to be provided alongside advice on other benefits and available grants (including Scottish Welfare Fund, Council Tax Reduction, Housing Benefit); budgeting support; debt advice; and support with disability benefit appeals. The MAM team will also make referrals to other support services - such as mental health, housing, and employability support - and will help clients to access other local third sector support.

2. Invest in public sector food to increase access to nutritious, culturally appropriate food for all and build greater local food resilience. Public sector food is an established route to supporting households, and has many objectives beyond tackling poverty.

School meals and the role of the schools in our communities are a good source of support that can be expanded. Access to food in school settings should be as easy and as rewarding as possible. So, there should be consideration of how auto-enrolment can be made to work and we should look to regularly involve pupils

in reviews of all types of food provision in school to boost take up of meals. Of course, food insecurity for families is driven by low income, so the work underway in many areas to bring Financial Inclusion Advisors into schools to support families with financial pressures should be expanded nationwide. We should be expanding current provision for all to include breakfast clubs, possibly after-school meals, and doing more in the holidays, including possible connections to rewarding activities. Recent announcements by politicians of various parties on these points are very welcome. Our Deep Dive with Women highlighted the importance of expansion of free school meals:

- “Committing to a universal free school meals approach can significantly reduce health and educational inequalities and help many families who struggle with in-work poverty but do not currently fit qualifying criteria for such schemes.”

Local food economies should be strengthened in a number of ways, including by the public sector food and drink procurement, sourcing food from, for example, local producers and providers. The Scottish Government’s offer on the Best Start Foods programme could be improved by collaborating with local food businesses. More should be done to purchase surplus direct from producers and encourage the donation of surplus for social good.

School kitchens and wider public sector premises are public resources and should be available throughout the year for community use and to better enable local food provision. Making best use of schools, early years settings, care homes, hospitals and other facilities could help deliver services in a more efficient and collaborative way. Good practice in overcoming barriers to access should be shared.

3. Tackle non-financial barriers to food. Many people, especially older and disabled people, experience non-financial barriers to food including physical and digital barriers and issues around the availability of food and the resilience of local food systems to meet diverse nutritional and cultural needs. It is important to be clear that drivers of financial and physical barriers to accessing food are usually separate but related and will intersect.

To overcome non-financial barriers to accessing food, there’s a need to invest for the long-term in local shopping and meal delivery services, and

these must be knitted together with other local services. For example:

CASE STUDY: Food Train, a Scottish charity, makes hundreds of grocery deliveries every week for older people, providing vital services to those who are no longer able to manage independently, through age, ill health, frailty or disability. The charity, which recently celebrated its 25th anniversary, delivers support across nine local authorities. Teams of local volunteers help with household jobs, delivering books from their library service and providing friendly social contact and meals through befriending services. It runs a Scotland-wide Meal Makers service which matches volunteers with an older person in their community to share weekly home-cooked meals.

A practical approach, tailored around people’s food needs, can also help tackle isolation and support public health and provide access to wider services. This doesn’t necessarily need to be delivered by local authorities and defined by geographical boundaries, but could make use of public kitchens, community organisations and existing routes to people’s homes like the postal service.

Finally, the supply chain issues we were concerned about during the pandemic are not going away. There are risks from the changes brought in by Brexit but, still more worryingly, the likelihood of increasing weather-related disruption. All of us, working in partnership, need to develop a proactive approach to food availability, resilience and response planning that involves producers, suppliers and retailers and provides fair access in all parts of Scotland.

Read the ‘Access to Food’ policy circle report [here](#).

CALL TO ACTION 9

Set a target to end digital exclusion in the next parliamentary term

OUR ASPIRATION – Affordable access to digital tools, connectivity and literacy – digital inclusion – should be available to everyone. It enables participation and inclusion across communities and can “level the playing field”, including for those such as disabled people or those living in remote areas who can’t always participate in face-to-face activities. The huge shift to digital seen during the pandemic has been a lifeline for many. It has enabled people to access health and legal services, to buy food and other goods, and to remain connected to friends, family and the wider community. The Board believes that everyone should have access to digital kit, data and services and that our initial emphasis should be on those most digitally excluded. However, a goal for the Scottish Government should be an end to digital exclusion in the next parliamentary term, with the potential for digital access as a future right.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

1. Set a target to end digital exclusion in the next parliamentary term. Targets can, in some cases, usefully drive action. We think that an ambition to end digital exclusion in the next five years is achievable. The next Scottish Government should commit to setting and meeting such a target over that timeframe.

2. Deepen the Connecting Scotland partnership between the Scottish Government, local authorities, SCVO, and the third sector to ensure capacity and delivery that meets the needs of all citizens. The Board acknowledges the Scottish Government’s significant investment in digital access, connectivity and skills. However, to end digital exclusion once and for all, further commitment and additional resources will be needed.

3. Consider creating a duty on public bodies to enable digital access. This would ensure that digital exclusion does not re-emerge as technologies change. This could be along the lines of the duty under Section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Person’s Act 1970 which compelled local authorities to provide a range of services.

4. Ensure that those who can’t or don’t want to use digital are not left behind. We know that some older and disabled people, amongst others, find it very difficult to use digital. People with literacy problems are also likely to struggle without significant support. We cannot end one form of exclusion only to create another. So parallel opportunities to engage – as well as or instead of digital – must be available and being planned to ensure inclusive and accessible communications for all.

CALL TO ACTION 10

Adopt the principles of Universal Basic Services

ASPIRATION – Scotland has long benefited from strong ‘universal services’ – services that everyone can expect to support them through their lives. We think the current set of universal services needs to be re-imagined and expanded if we are to address the challenges of the next decade. So we are calling on the next Scottish Government commit to the principles underpinning ‘[Universal Basic Services](#)’ thinking and practice to date. Further Scottish development work will be needed to close the gap between where we are now and where we want to arrive at. In particular, the Scottish Government should develop pilots to deliver reductions in energy, travel, housing and digital costs, which will reduce and then remove the poverty premium facing low-income consumers.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

1. The Scottish Government should adopt the principles of Universal Basic Services as a long-term aim in Scotland. Universal Basic Services offers a model for improved and expanded collective services that meet essential needs, whether delivered by the state or not. Services should be designed to be inclusive and address barriers faced by women, refugees, older and disabled people, amongst others. In many ways the model builds on the Scottish Government’s current approach – for example, the Scottish Approach to Service Design - and there are steps that can be taken now to make it happen.

2. The Scottish Government, working with communities, local authorities and key stakeholders, should reconsider what are defined as essential and statutory services. For example, social care is currently being explored as a potential universal service, funded through taxation and delivered alongside the NHS.

3. The Scottish Government should undertake feasibility studies into piloting approaches to delivering a Universal Basic Services approach in practice in Scotland. Prioritisation for services under consideration should be based on key costs for individuals that drive insecurity, and should be tailored to different peoples’ and groups’ needs. Universal Basic Services should not mean one-size-fits all state-run services, but should offer inclusive services, ensure that services deliver equality and fulfil human rights, and offer agency and choice for citizens, a range of ways to provide collective services, and take full account of the intersectional nature of financial insecurity.

In particular, the Scottish Government should undertake pilots into specific actions that could deliver reductions in energy, travel, housing, childcare and digital costs, working with regulators and providers where possible. This has potential to contribute towards our national efforts to tackle child poverty. These could include:

- Ensuring housing with liveable rents, including new income-based rental agreements which guarantee that housing costs never surpass a certain level of affordability (e.g. 30% of income).
- Social tariffs for broadband and other essential digital services – providing free and discounted digital access to low-income families across Scotland. This would obviously link into the previous Call to Action on digital inclusion.
- Providing some element of free (or as close to free) heat and power each day/week for low-income households. This could include consideration of strengthened social tariffs for heat and power, making use of fuel vouchers and existing benefits to target those in fuel poverty and reviewing existing support for peoples’ heating bills (such as Winter Fuel Payments, Warm Home Discount, Winter Heating Assistance, Cold Spell Heating Assistance).
- Extension to travel discounts and free public transport provision – as Covid-19 restrictions begin to be removed and as part of Scotland’s net-zero ambitions between now and 2045.

The next CALLS TO ACTION focus on basic rights to ensure everyone can participate fully in a renewed Scotland.

CALL TO ACTION 11

Incorporate key international human rights instruments into Scots Law so as to deliver real change

OUR ASPIRATION – The Scottish Government should incorporate key international human rights instruments into Scots Law, in line with the forthcoming recommendations from the National Taskforce on Leadership in Human Rights, to address current gaps in the protection of human rights and ensure the fulfilment and respect of rights for all. These are: the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); the UN Convention for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (UNCERD); the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (already being taken forward by a Bill in the Scottish Parliament); the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UCRD); and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). These, and the use of refreshed existing mechanisms such as the Public Sector Equality Duty, offer us the potential to transform practice in the design, delivery, and resourcing of public services, the formulation of public policy and finance decisions.

HOW WILL WE GET THERE?

1. Involve Rights holders fully – from the very beginning – in the process to incorporate these conventions into domestic law. This will be essential for these conventions to have a meaningful impact on everyday lives. Lived experience will need to be at the heart of co-design and implementation.

2. Fund awareness and understanding of these new rights. In practice, this will mean resourcing civil society organisations that represent the groups who are to benefit so people can be informed and supported and be able to take legal action if their rights have been breached.

3. Co-produce delivery on key dimensions of these rights. Incorporating rights in law will only be meaningful if accompanied by action – planned and embedded in partnership with rights holders and duty bearers – to shift policy, practice and organisational cultures, to enable the rights to be enforced, upheld and become a reality in people's day to day lives. It also means eliminating discrimination, for example, by ensuring an inclusive education system and ensuring that people are protected from all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse.

4. Take action to recast and realise the full potential of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Alongside these rights, existing mechanisms must play their full part in advancing equality and human rights. In particular, the Public Sector Equality Duty needs a full review and refresh as it has not delivered the change we need to see. We are pleased that such a review has now been announced by the Scottish Government. The review must involve equality stakeholders throughout and must be able to deliver radical reform to the content of the Scotland-specific regulations and their implementation, where needed, so that its original promise can be delivered.

5. Commitment to integrate equality and human rights budgeting in the Scottish Budget process to ensure that needs are reflected in policy and resource allocation processes through the Scottish Budget to public authorities charged with delivering on the National Outcomes.

CALL TO ACTION 12

Take action to realise the human rights of disabled people

OUR ASPIRATION – The last Call to Action focused on the incorporation of human rights conventions, including the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability. A concrete plan of action is needed if those rights are to be realised fully. For example, to deliver for disabled people, a focus on good quality data, proper social care and adequate incomes is essential. Steps for each of these are provided here. We want to make sure that disabled people can live full lives and participate alongside their peers, with support and choices.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

1. Improve data collection on the wider impacts of Covid-19 and resultant inequalities, including collecting and reporting the numbers who have died with Covid-19 who are disabled people, older people and carers. Priority should be given to the collection and use of Covid-19 data disaggregated by disability (for example people with Downs Syndrome are 10 times more likely to die than other people), as well as age and ethnicity.

2. Ensure that social security policies support the incomes of disabled people and their families, allowing for the extra costs that come with disability. Disabled people are the only group who have had no increase in benefits so far and given that it is more expensive to live as a disabled person - e.g. extra costs for transport, heating, holidays - the Board feels that this should be rectified. This could be done by:

- Improving the adequacy of Disability Assistance.
- Reinstating the Independent Living Fund (ILF) Scotland and Northern Ireland. This should be reopened to new applicants, with a few improvements, to deliver funding directly to people with highest needs and ensure money intended for social care support is spent on social care support. We know the ILF works and we know it can be delivered.
- The 'Care Tax' - Social Care charges - should be scrapped for social care support so that disabled people of all ages and their carers benefit. This 'Care Tax' pushes some disabled people into poverty and drags others, already on low incomes, further beneath the poverty line. These charges also create work disincentives for both disabled people and carers.

3. Ensure social care proposals currently under consideration take disabled people's needs fully into account. A key element of living independently is being able to access social care when, where and in what way it is needed. We look forward to the outcome of the planned Independent Review of Adult Social Care and set out here additional actions that could be taken to improve social care services. These include:

- Exploring the concept of a National Care Service (separate from NHS but working closely together). This should be inclusive of third sector providers, free from profit-driven targets and free at the point of access, wherever you are and whatever your social care need.
- Carers should be able to access short breaks and replacement care. Carers must be able to combine caring with employment, education, training and leisure.
- Disabled people's access to vital services should be accelerated to mitigate unequal impacts of the Covid-19 restrictions and beyond on physical and mental health and life outcomes including: Healthcare; Social Care; Housing; Mental Health Supports; Wellbeing Support - including support established during the pandemic.

Read the Age and Disability policy circle [here](#).

CALL TO ACTION 13

Build inclusive communication into all national and local government funding requirements

OUR ASPIRATION - Clear and accessible communication is always important but never more so than during the pandemic. During the first lockdown, when face-to-face communication was severely restricted, TV, radio, online messaging and even national helplines were pivotal in ensuring everyone received timely information in a format and language that was accessible to them. What this demonstrated was that for effective action that has broad buy in, or when communicating what local support is available, it is important to have clear and accessible public messaging that everyone can benefit from.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

1. Inclusive communication should be built into all national and local government funding requirements. We know that this isn't always considered by public bodies and lived experience suggests that complex application procedures in relation to financial or other support was a barrier to older and disabled people, including those with learning disabilities, and some minority ethnic communities, accessing that support. Learning from this and in addition to what is set out above on Access to Digital, the Board recommends that inclusive communication is built into all national and local government frameworks including pandemic responses and all related communications strategies. These should routinely consider British Sign Language, sub-titling and minority languages, as appropriate. Inclusive communications should also be built into funding requirements. This should require the public sector and recipients of funding to demonstrate how they will ensure inclusive communication and accessible processes in their work.

2. The UK Government should be encouraged to adopt inclusive and accessible communications in its approach to benefits. Social Security Scotland – the agency managing devolved benefits in Scotland - is working to a strong principle of inclusive and accessible communication but UK reserved benefits cannot be accessed in the same inclusive way. The UK Government should be encouraged to learn from this best practice.

CALL TO ACTION 14

Strengthen measures to prevent and address hate crime and public sexual harassment

OUR ASPIRATION - Hate crime currently covers disability, race (and related characteristics), religion, sexual orientation and transgender identity, with the Hate Crime Bill adding age and, perhaps, sex to that list. Hate Crime and public sexual harassment harms individuals and damages families and communities - it must be addressed for all affected groups. Significant investment in preventative approaches are needed. While of course we want to see reductions in experience of hate crime, because current reporting mechanisms are inadequate, a significant improvement in the accessibility of reporting a hate crime or hate incident is needed over the next five years. Action here should help ensure that hate crime and public sexual harassment reporting more closely aligns with actual incidents. Significant improvements to the Third Party Reporting Scheme are needed to deliver this.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

1. The Scottish Government should place significant investment on preventative approaches to hate crime and public sexual harassment, based on evidence of 'what works' to create attitude and behaviour change, e.g. positive messaging campaigns.

2. The Scottish Government should fund organisations independent of the criminal justice system that have the confidence of the communities they serve and that support the victims of hate crime and public sexual harassment.

3. The Scottish Government should also invest in a rebranded and revised Third Party Reporting scheme. This investment would ensure that those affected understand and acknowledge what constitutes a hate crime; also, that this should not be accepted or tolerated and finally, that they can be supported to report these incidents in a safe and supportive third party environment. Additional benefits of this investment will include raising awareness, providing peer support and access to positive role models, addressing stigma and prejudice, effective use of the laws on hate crime and sentencing, positive role-models, and wider education on tolerance.

4. Government must learn from the work of the Misogyny Working Group, chaired by Baroness Kennedy of the Shaws, which will identify approaches to tackling public harassment of women specifically.

CALL TO ACTION 15

Apply the rights and entitlements in this report to all migrants

OUR ASPIRATION - Scotland warmly welcomes all migrants and we are playing a critical role particularly in ensuring displaced families have a new place to call home and a chance to build new lives and contribute to Scotland's future. Migrants who have settled in Scotland are part of our communities. They are our work colleagues, our neighbours and our friends. It is in this spirit that the Board wants to see the rights outlined above and throughout this document extended to all migrants including refugees and asylum seekers. This will become an increasingly important priority as the implications of Brexit begin to impact people's lives.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

1. Fully explore all possible powers/levers to prioritise refugee integration. Refugees and asylum seekers are assets to our communities and, as they rebuild their lives here, they help to make Scotland stronger, more compassionate and more successful as a nation. Therefore, the Scottish Government, COSLA and Scottish Refugee Council should work in partnership to lead the implementation of the current [New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy](#), fully exploring and applying all possible powers and levers in Scotland to prioritise refugee integration, enjoyment of rights and incorporation of actions in this report. This should include developing dedicated national Public Health Scotland guidance on refugees and asylum seekers and migrant rights in the Covid-19 recovery phase.

2. Engage with employers to promote the right to volunteer of asylum seekers and encourage employers to recruit refugees into their workforce. In the immediate term, the Scottish Government should engage with employers to promote asylum seekers' right to volunteer, and review guidance to employers so they understand the right to work of refugees and asylum seekers, how to make their workplaces attractive and more accessible and why having a diverse workforce meets business needs.

3. Conduct an urgent review of the socio-economic impacts of No Recourse to Public Funds. There should be collective representations to the Home Office and HM Treasury for urgent review of the socio-economic impacts of No Recourse to Public Funds on migrant populations in Scotland and the ability of Scottish public and third sectors and communities to prevent and meet increased needs. The Scottish Government and COSLA Anti-Destitution strategy - to prevent and mitigate destitution of those subject to No Recourse to Public Funds - should be published

and funding should be provided to take action as a result.

4. Conduct a review on the case for policy or executive devolution of asylum support policy.

The Scottish Government should conduct a review on the case for policy or executive devolution of asylum support policy - with adequate UK resources - and on the basis of a clear inter-governmental arrangement and Memorandum of Understanding with the Home Office and HM Treasury. Such devolution must be on basis of powers of formal oversight by Scottish Ministers and local authorities over Home Office contractors and a commitment to UK-funded refugee dispersal and no use of institutional accommodation for asylum seekers.

5. Scottish Government should strengthen its ask of the UK Government to allow asylum seekers to work while they are awaiting a decision on their asylum claim and clarify whether asylum seekers and migrants with No Recourse to Public Funds can access employability support services. Allowing asylum seekers to lawfully carry out paid work whilst their application is being considered could help to mitigate the worst of these impacts and so the Scottish Government should increase their calls on the UK Government to allow this. In the same vein, the Scottish Government should clarify whether asylum seekers and migrants with No Recourse to Public Funds can access employability support services. The Scottish Government and COSLA Anti-Destitution strategy must be published and fully resourced so it can mitigate and prevent harm to those in the asylum process, as well as migrants also caught up in the NRPf regime. This links to the anti-NRPf commitments in the updated [Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan](#) and the [Everyone Home Together Route Map](#) against migrant destitution in Scotland.

6. Push back against enforced migrant removals.

The economic recession from the Covid-19 pandemic combined with the end of the Brexit transition has created a perfect storm for an escalation of exploitation and vulnerability of migrants in Scotland. This could increase migrant homelessness and is particularly concerning in the light of recent changes to the Immigration Rules which will make rough sleeping a basis, with no safeguards, for refusal of or cancelling leave to remain. This may deter vulnerable migrants and refused asylum seekers from accessing support. Enforced removals may be attempted by the Home Office. It will be important for the Scottish public sector, especially Ministers, Police Scotland and local authorities to push back against any use of this in Scotland.

4. COMMUNITIES AND COLLECTIVE ENDEAVOUR

The four Calls to Action in this chapter focus on giving more power to people and communities, empowering frontline teams, and building new ways of working, based on what has worked well during the pandemic and developing new arrangements for local governance. Changes needed are not all about funding: they are about leadership, culture, values, a commitment to place-based working, and an enduring commitment to change.

WHAT DO WE KNOW?

The need to do more to share power is one of the central messages in our report and, as we heard from our engagement activity, many communities recognise that they have the skills and ability to do more for themselves and want to build on the positives of the pandemic response:

- “I noticed a lot of people changed their attitude towards helping others in the community. People came together to help other people, the virus made people work more together and look after each other.”
- “Communities now recognise that we have a wide range of skill sets and can do things for ourselves.” - Community Listening Events
- The Deep Dive with Older People unanimously agreed that they had seen a definite intergenerational approach to community engagement and hoped that this practice could be maintained moving forward, as it gave the participants hope.

Our Call for Ideas asked both for power to be shared more equally and for the most marginalised voices to be more clearly heard. This was seen as vital to understand what change was needed and to realise the huge potential in what communities have to offer.

We heard very clearly that ‘experts by experience’ within communities should be more involved in decisions that affect them. For example, the ‘Addressing Low Income’ circle held a deliberative workshop with unpaid carers, who felt very strongly that it was wrong that the board for the Review of Adult Social Care did not have an unpaid carer on it. They argued that carers need to be involved in shaping the policies that affected their lives, otherwise their needs cannot be properly addressed. In the workshop with Radiant and Brighter, the group of Black and minority ethnic women felt that there was nothing in the Scottish Government’s Programme for Government for them and that

many of the actions described would not help them or meet their needs. They also felt that Black and minority ethnic women were not well represented in decision-making. There was also a view that caring roles and stereotypes often excluded women from community decision-making, which is intensified for Black and minority ethnic women and disabled women.

Genuinely good engagement often delivers real results, as we heard from Interfaith Scotland. Engagement between faith communities and policy-makers helped them step up to offer support in a multitude of ways such as preparing and delivering food to large numbers of people; continuing to operate food banks for those experiencing food insecurity; keeping connected with older and at risk communities through phone calls and via email; and supporting the mental health of a vast number of individuals:

“Faith Communities have been grateful for the increased engagement with the Scottish Government over the pandemic. This has allowed for collaboration on safely using places of worship to give practical and spiritual support to thousands of individuals and communities during the crisis.”
- Interfaith Scotland

Our Deep Dive with Disabled People argued that more participation by excluded groups is part of what is needed to improve how the Public Sector Equality Duty and particularly Equality Impact Assessments are used. They also pointed to the need to build policy-makers’ equality competence and develop a more robust approach to meeting the duty to implement change:

- “Disabled people’s expertise is vital to ensuring policies and decisions don’t leave us behind and exacerbate our inequality.”- Deep Dive with Disabled People

We also heard that more direct help – and resource – is needed to make sure that lesser-heard voices are able to participate in full from the outset.

- Throughout our Covid-19 engagement, disabled people have emphasised that participation and having their voices heard are vital to driving forwards all the other progress we need to see.” – Deep Dive with Disabled People
- “Often input isn’t received from certain communities, so assumptions are made on their needs. Young people wanted to stress the importance in listening to their input... ensuring that it can benefit everyone.” – Deep Dive with Young People

Sharing power with communities, and actively supporting them to engage, is one way to make progress here. For example, our Call for Ideas heard that moving a greater proportion of Local Government budgets to ‘participatory budgeting’ approaches – where local communities get to decide how funding should be spent through facilitated discussion – should be speeded up and participation for all made easier. A related issue is how we can make community ownership – buying land, buildings or other assets and then running them for the benefit of the community – easier for everyone so we get positive and sustainable outcomes and better places to live and work.

Community wealth building (CWB) is an example of a people-centred approach to local economic development that is now being rolled out across Scotland. CWB has a practical local focus, as well as being a cross-Scotland means to deliver a wellbeing economy. CWB purposefully redirects wealth back to communities by encouraging more democratic and inclusive forms of economic ownership of land and economic activity more generally. ‘Anchor institutions’, such as universities, local authorities or health boards have key roles here, as they are significant economic agents who employ people, procure and commission goods and services, own significant amounts of land and property and can have significant financial resources. The aim is to harness this, alongside business and social anchors, to help ensure that the opportunities, employment and wealth generated by all this activity stays within communities.

Meaningful involvement of communities is already working well in some places and some policy areas. Other examples include the Experience Panels that have shaped the design and delivery of Scottish social security, the Poverty Truth Commissions that have linked to a small number of councils to influence local decision-making, and participatory budgeting approaches that give local people a say on how a small amount of public money is spent. We need to build on the impact this involvement is having in a step change for how decisions are taken. We also need to increase capacity of policy-makers, planners, and those designing services so that they can more effectively increase participation of those with lived experience in policy making, service design and funding decisions.

That’s why **CALL TO ACTION 16** calls for a further shift in the balance of power, enabling individuals and communities to have more control over shaping local and national policy, more help to realise the greatest benefit from local assets, and more say in taking funding and grant-making decisions – all in a way that maximises place-based approaches and advances equality.

This Call to Action also focuses on how we can make the most of the volunteers who have played a central role in the Covid-19 response. A recent study suggests that over the course of the pandemic, 74% of people in Scotland have either informally or formally supported fellow citizens through volunteering and additional research suggests that volunteering rates are likely to increase by 10%. This again brings to the fore the importance of place and community – people tended to do their volunteering at a local or even hyper-local level, because it’s right in front of them and really means something:

- “The increase in volunteering has been significant. I really hope it continues after this is over.” – Community Listening Event
- “I’ve seen much more volunteers in my community and I think it’s great. We came together like we never have before. We couldn’t rely on anyone but ourselves. We helped with food support, prescription pickups, supply parcels, dog walks, phone calls to people we knew who were isolating.”
- “[Volunteering] gave [the participants] a sense of purpose and helped combat loneliness and isolation by way of regular social interaction.” – Deep Dive with Older People

But at the same time, we heard that volunteering needed to be made easier and that barriers were still making things difficult:

- “The young people felt that everyone should have access to volunteering, and opportunities that support their needs and goals, including those who have never previously participated or expressed an interest in doing so.” – Deep Dive with Young People
- “Stop punishing and restricting volunteers – if you volunteer full time that’s just as good as working full time.” – Poverty Truth Commission Engagement

Another lesson from the Covid-19 response has been that the way in which help and support is provided makes a big difference to relationships and to outcomes.

Frontline teams who have more flexibility and freedom to prevent or solve problems can quickly build trust in communities and deliver impressive results. These teams are often best placed to help individuals, families and communities. Before the pandemic, good practice examples were already known about. For example, to prevent homelessness, frontline workers were given autonomy to spend small amounts of money to sort individual problems people had on the street, whether that was paying for things like transportation or bills. This had a positive effect on people at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping. Through the pandemic, we have seen how teams were able to support families who were already experiencing challenging circumstances before Covid-19.

Equally, approaches that empowered individuals, families and communities in receipt of services were crucial. Services should be designed around individuals and their needs, taking account of their hopes and dreams and the strengths and assets they bring. We need to move from a situation where people simply have to accept the services on offer to one where services are tailored to their individual needs.

So in **CALL TO ACTION 17**, we are calling on the public sector and other partners to take action to empower teams so they can act quickly and flexibly to solve problems that individuals and families cannot sort out by themselves. Individuals and families in receipt of services must also have more say - they should be able to enjoy genuinely coherent and joined up support in a place that they can easily access, not a multitude of different, poorly connected

services in multiple places. This means more ability to choose and shape packages of support for themselves. All this will need a genuine shift within the public sector towards values-based and place-based approaches, with more and better opportunities for the third sector to work in partnership, add value and act as a vital bridge between statutory services and families.

Finally, we are calling for systems change at organisational level and recognise that in the main this will affect Local Government and other parts of the public sector working locally.

Partnership working has been accelerated during the pandemic. The third sector, communities, Local Government and the Scottish Government worked together at pace to deliver immediate solutions to problems like emergency food, avoiding homelessness, reducing social isolation and loneliness, and helping tenants avoid evictions. Flexible, fast funding – where it was available – helped make this happen. It was also important that reporting requirements were either kept to a minimum or were actually useful.

- “There was partnership working between professionals and services – at national and local levels; and at strategic and operational levels – to find practical, responsive and creative solutions that meet the needs of the children, young people and families they work with and support.” – CELCIS
- “Local funding was made easy to access and quickly provided with limited conditions attached. This helped enormously.”
- “One of the best points was the quick access to funding money. Three grants were awarded in the first few weeks enabling the Group to take action quickly and efficiently.” - Community Listening Events

The third sector played a vital role in the success of the Covid-19 response. However, at the same time, the sector was badly hit by the restrictions placed on income-generation during lockdown in particular. Insecure and/or short-term funding, plus the need to change functions quickly, has meant some third sector organisations battling to survive at precisely the time when we need them the most.

- “Joined up working with third sector has been beneficial and I hope they are able to continue to do so after the pandemic is over.” - Community Listening Events

Our Call for Ideas highlighted that government and partners should be actively supporting and enhancing the capabilities of the third sector across Scotland and focusing on long-term, sustainable funding. For example, on LGBTI issues, there was a call for collaborative working with the public and third sectors in order to meet the needs of LGBTI people in all Scottish communities; there was an ask for sustainable resourcing and additional funding for LGBTI programmes, and a move away from short-term project-based funding to enable services to expand beyond the central belt.

CALL TO ACTION 18 includes a shift towards long-term systems of risk and reward, and a secure and sustainable third sector. It also looks to make sure the changes across this section of the report are in place for the long-term. That means the public sector and other partners building on new ways of working, based on what worked well during the pandemic and developing new arrangements for local governance.

Communities are intrinsically linked to places. Places contribute to the wellbeing of people, planet and the economy and everyone has a role to play in making the place where they live successful. Places are the heart of the community, can provide shared and sustainable access to products and services, have an ability to focus sustainable and local economic and social activity and can deliver enhanced wellbeing through a sense of place, history, wellness and environmental positivity.

As an illustration, the Call for Ideas highlighted the need for safe places for LGBTI people to meet and socialise – and this is key. Without places that meet communities' needs, how can better programmes and better services be delivered?

A place-based approach is simply a more joined-up, participative way to deliver changes to services, land and buildings, and across sectors – all within a place. These approaches aim to bring about increased opportunities for people and communities to shape their own lives and better outcomes for everyone. As we finalise this report, we are all once again required by restrictions to stay local, shop local, and work at home where we can. The importance of good quality local facilities in good quality neighbourhoods has never been so clear. Place is where all the other Calls to Action come together on the ground and a strong focus on Place is required throughout to deliver. **CALL TO ACTION 18**, above, includes a focus on programmes to drive place-based working, while **CALL TO ACTION 19** sets out place as an approach that ties together all the actions in this report.

CALL TO ACTION 16

Further shift the balance of power so individuals and communities have more control over decisions that affect their lives

OUR ASPIRATION - Our communities have responded to the pandemic with courage, hard graft, kindness and togetherness and a renewed Scotland must build on this shared sense of purpose. We are therefore calling for a further shift in the balance of power, so that individuals and communities have more control over the decisions that affect their lives and the money spent locally, while at the same time taking action to advance equality and build sustainable places with strong community resources.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

1. The Scottish Government, Local Government and the wider public sector should make a commitment that experts by experience will always be involved in shaping and designing policies and programmes that affect them.

To do this, experts by experience will need to be actively supported. They must be:

- Engaged through wide reaching community development approaches.
- Empowered through meaningful participation, capacity building and co-production.
- Involved on boards and reviews (such as the Adult Social Care Review and the Social Renewal Advisory Board) which affect them.
- Given tailored and accessible support to work closely with policy officials and Ministers - this support must also be given to officials and politicians so that they better understand how to work more effectively with communities.
- Recognised as having valuable insight and compensated financially for the expertise they offer.

The expectation from now must always be that policies and programmes will embed lived experience in their conception, design and delivery. For example, one respondent to our Call for Ideas argued that the lived experience of children and families experiencing poverty should be at the heart of all our efforts to tackle child poverty. This is something that the Scottish Government should actively factor into its approach to the next four-year Tackling Child Po

How lived experience influences decision-making will be crucial. Decision-making processes must be designed so they enable a culture of engagement, activism, support and challenge to improve the quality of our actions. This should be married with practical inclusion methods, including: flexible times and places for consultation events; childcare support; accessibility of timings; venues support and different participation formats. We should also be mindful of who is and is not in the room to ensure equality is always being advanced.

The Poverty and Inequality Commission intends to trial a new approach to involving experts by experience in its work over the next year and the Scottish Government should commit to learning from this.

2. Participatory budgeting should be widened and deepened and more diverse voices should be supported to get involved in decisions about public money.

Participatory budgeting (PB) brings real funding choices into the hands of local people and equality groups however, this needs to be deepened (a greater proportion of local budgets need to be determined based on PB) and widened (other parts of the public sector need to embrace PB). People should have a real say on the actual budgets of mainstream services and not marginal pockets of cash. This would begin to shift the current culture of engagement, which already asks a lot of organisations and communities sometimes with limited impact, towards meaningful, outcome-driven processes such as social procurement and community wealth building. These are the foundations upon which new local governance should be built.

Grant-giving also needs to involve experts by experience. We propose that the Third Sector Unit (TSU) should take a lead on this as a model within the Scottish Government and for the wider public sector. TSU should be tasked with embedding lived experience and more diverse voices in the development of its grant programmes and funding decisions and in so doing become more experienced in participatory grant-making. It should also lead a community of practice across government to build skills and confidence to achieve the normalisation of such approaches across core policy areas. This would improve the design of investment programmes and their ability to reach more diverse groups. To further increase funding transparency, all Scottish Government third sector funding across all directorates and local authorities should be published on the “360 giving platform” to make it easier to understand whether public money is addressing needs or not.

3. Volunteering should be made easier, for those who are in paid work and those who are not, and for carers and other people not in the formal labour market.

As a first step, the UK Government should change the rules on volunteering that seriously inhibit people’s ability to participate actively in their local community. The Department of Work and Pensions should fundamentally reassess its approach to Work Capability Assessments. In the coming months, we know that unemployment will increase. There will be people in the benefits system who have not needed to draw on that kind of support before. It will be essential for the health and wellbeing of individuals, families, places and communities that opportunities to participate and to volunteer are made as easy and stress-free as possible. To encourage this to happen, the Scottish Government should step up its lobbying on this issue.

Secondly, employers across the public and private sectors should be encouraged to value, recognise and build on the benefits of volunteering, utilising the [Social Good Connect](#) model and offering volunteering leave as a basic offer to the [Social Impact Pledge](#). Scottish Government, Local Government and many others in the public sector already offer their employees the opportunity to volunteer with paid days leave. This should form part of the new social contract on Fair Work, referenced within Call to Action 3. To give of our time and ourselves is one of the most rewarding things that we can do and the action proposed provides

an opportunity to make a difference and to give something back to our communities.

Thirdly, equality and inclusion considerations need to be taken more seriously and the Volunteer Delivery Plan offers an opportunity to address the gap for both disabled people and people from minority ethnic communities. We need to understand that those barriers that get in the way of people’s ability to volunteer are the same as those that get in the way of people’s ability to participate in wider decision-making. We must place greater value, financially and as a society, on the community work women do, including empowering women to transfer these skills into other areas of life such as employment and education.

Finally, resources are needed so that opportunities for volunteering are better supported, accessed, and utilised. The skills, kindness and commitment of formal and informal volunteers can be harnessed to improve people’s experience and wellbeing through volunteering, as well as the wellbeing of people receiving support from volunteers, now and into the future through investment in succession planning and organisational sustainability. This builds upon the calls for sustainable funding for the third sector in the next section, but also reflects the importance of local and national infrastructure and expertise to support community participation and volunteering. Third Sector Interfaces, along with other local authority and voluntary sector provision for community capacity building and learning, have a key role in helping communities to thrive. At the national level, third sector infrastructure bodies funded by the Scottish Government – Volunteer Scotland and SCVO – have a vital role in coordinating support and research regarding participation, as well as providing an important representative voice at the strategic level. They must be supported.

Read more about these proposals in the Communities and Volunteering policy circle report [here](#).

4. The Scottish Government, with local authorities and other public bodies, should make Community Asset Transfer and Ownership easier.

Community Asset Transfers have been successful in Scotland, and in some areas a large number of asset transfers have been achieved. However, communities still need more support to make the most of that success for the long-term benefit of local people. We have set out here six steps that would help.

- i. A mix of revenue and capital funding should be made available to help communities prepare for the purchase of land, buildings and other assets and then to actually buy them. Funding should also be available post-acquisition - this is often essential to make assets fit for purpose and financially sustainable. The key aim is that any community-owned asset becomes locally self-sustaining, benefiting local people via co-working, community functions, local and circular economy, and growing local skills. None of this is easy but the goal often seems to be to buy the asset and then there is a real struggle to get it to work as the capacity is not there at the outset to drive it forward.
- ii. The appeals/review process should apply from the submission of the Asset Transfer Request. Currently, appeals are only possible once a decision is made or if the public authority fails to meet the timescale for validating applications. That means that communities cannot appeal where a public authority considers an application not to be competent.
- iii. Community Right to Buy (CRtB) legislation should be amended to make it easier for urban communities to buy land and other assets. When the legislation was expanded in 2016 to include urban communities, principles that were developed for a rural environment were not changed. This means it is often unworkable for communities in densely populated areas to use the legislation to buy land or buildings.
- iv. The use of the electoral roll in CRtB should be reviewed. This can effectively disenfranchise significant numbers of people, including refugees and other residents who, for various reasons, are not on the electoral roll within their community. Alternative options should be explored that would provide a more inclusive approach, particularly in disadvantaged communities.
- v. Changes made to CRtB criteria in 2016 increased the mandatory response from residents to 75% from 50% - this should be reversed. This can be a real issue for groups that seek support from local people, part-time residents and regular holidaymakers.
- vi. The provisions to meet the crofting CRtB eligibility requirements should be aligned to CRtB provisions.

CALL TO ACTION 17

Improve service delivery and design by empowering frontline teams and the people and communities they serve

OUR ASPIRATION - Another lesson from the collective response to Covid-19 has been that teams who have more flexibility and freedom to prevent or solve problems can quickly build trust in communities and deliver impressive results. These frontline teams are often best placed to help individuals, families and communities. So we are calling on the public sector and other partners to empower teams - to do the right thing, take decisions and act quickly and flexibly to help solve problems. We also want to give more choice to the people and communities in receipt of services. This means a change in culture, embedding agile and streamlined ways of working; it means a significant commitment from organisations to values-based leadership - a wholesale change programme - that creates space and gives permission for people to do more within their own roles across organisations, taking more ownership of how they deliver.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

1. Commit to values-based leadership as a wholesale change programme. Leadership and workforce cultures across the public and third sectors are key to enabling the change needed. Values-based leadership - across all levels of an organisation - can help empower staff to do the right thing, to take positive risks and to implement relational approaches.

Embedding values-based leadership in all organisations that work to support individuals, families and communities would allow the system to move the focus away from process and metrics to using the impact on service users as a measure of success. Embedding this approach at all levels - from senior management teams to individual practitioners - would ensure a close line of sight to the overall strategic direction and ensure that frontline staff are empowered to put this into practice. Equally, this level of engagement and empowerment makes certain that the strategic direction remains current and relevant.

Many organisations are already doing this. There are a number of existing values-based leadership programmes, and excellent examples of organisations who have committed, along with their partners, to wholesale change programmes. We should look to draw on these examples to ensure values are placed at the heart of all services, both in the public and third sectors.

2. We need collectively to transfer power to the people we have a duty to support, and to frontline staff that work most closely with them, regardless of sector. There are thousands of skilled and passionate people working across our public and third sectors, striving every day to make this country a better place for all of us. We saw from the response to the pandemic that frontline workers/teams can, when given the freedom and permission to innovate, quickly solve problems for individuals and families, and from there build trust and positive relationships.

Frontline staff need to be empowered to use their professional judgement, optimise compassionate and values-based approaches and make the most of calculated opportunities when they arise. Values-based leadership will enable this transfer of power across the system to both frontline staff and the families they support.

3. Individuals and families must have opportunities to influence how services help them meet their needs and build on their capabilities. The 'Cross-Cutting Delivery Circle' report for the Board focuses on the Social Innovation Partnership (SIP), a funding partnership between the Scottish Government and the Hunter Foundation.

The SIP 'community-around-the-child' model, which is place-based, aims to build an active community partnership alongside existing parent council models and similar bodies. When schools draw on the assets from within their communities to deliver deep support to children and their wider families, all involved can flourish. This model involves local people and local

organisations, including the private sector, to offer a range of support suited to the whole family. The model of support is 365, seven-days-a-week, delivered using community assets, recognising that families don't stop having support needs at the end of the day.

The SIP's specific proposals explore how we can begin to transfer power to families and frontline staff and switch to relational/values-based approaches. It provides improved space for the third sector to work in partnership, add value and act as a vital bridge between statutory services and families where required. The approach represents a continuum of support for individuals and families and a means by which we can change power dynamics and give more agency to families and individuals. Taken as a whole, and embedded within a community, this approach and others like it aim to bring about real and deep change in public service delivery and culture so that public services (including those delivered by the third sector) in turn become enablers for real change for families and communities.

There is already evidence of community partnership approaches where this joining up of assets is having a significant impact on young people and their families. They are being offered mentoring programmes, strength-based learning, coaching and employability support, family support and flexible childcare as part of a package of support. Each community-around-the-child school would develop differently in line with the needs and aspirations of their families and the assets they are able to draw on from within the community.

The SIP model of 'community-around-the-child', with personalised budgeting, is shortly to be taken up by one local authority.

You can read more about these proposals in the 'Cross-Cutting Delivery Circle' report [here](#).

CALL TO ACTION 18

Build on new ways of working, based on what has worked well during the pandemic, and develop new arrangements for local governance

OUR ASPIRATION - To build on these new approaches at an organisational and governmental scale, we are calling on the public sector and other partners to build on new ways of working, based on what has worked well and what we have learned during the pandemic and to develop new arrangements for local governance, with the communities they serve. This will help make sure these changes are in place for the long-term. Actions here include a shift towards long-term systems of risk and reward to bring about a secure and sustainable third sector. We say more about the need to enhance the current model of how people are governed locally and for greater collaboration, including on the key issues of public health and health inequalities. Making sure that place-based approaches include every community, clearly focusing on tackling structural inequalities and taking specific equalities approaches will also be key.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

1. The Scottish Government and wider public sector should make a significant budgetary shift towards prevention and equality.

Prevention has been a goal since Christie but it will not happen unless and until there is a significant budgetary shift towards prevention. A radical, transformational approach to prevention would represent a different economic model – that is what is needed to make the fiscal shift happen. Similarly, equality has been part of the Scottish Government's budget process since the mid-2000s but advancing equality is still not driving decision-making; a more participative and equality-competent budget setting process is needed and moving from annual budgeting will be key to this. The next Scottish Government should launch a formal review into how it can ensure that prevention and equality-budgeting models are at the heart of future Budgets, as a model for the wider public sector.

2. Local authorities should explore and embrace participative and empowering models, sharing responsibility and ownership with local communities.

Across Scotland, local government has given effect to its community leadership role by working together with communities and bringing together partners, revisiting values, culture and behaviours and trusting their citizens, building new relationships built around respect and collaboration. They are taking an assets-based approach to services in a place, with communities being empowered to take over and manage facilities themselves, promoting self-reliance and independence. It has moved to providing services in local groups where people know and trust each other, rather than focusing

on expensive and less effective public services.

We must see more of this kind of approach here in Scotland if we are to shift the balance of power in favour of the citizen. The time has come to develop new ways of working that challenge our understanding of the relationship between communities and public authorities and which acknowledge and address issues of power and inequality. Partnerships and collaborations must be based on responding to what matters to people, communities and places, building on strengths and assets.

3. Public sector and third sector partners should commit to long-term systems of risk and reward which focus on long-term outcomes to achieve shared goals, with the aim of delivering a secure and sustainable future for the third sector.

The current focus on managing short-term risk and process within statutory, commissioned and grant-funded services needs to be rebalanced toward achieving longer-term goals of better lives for people and a step change in outcomes across the whole system. Some of this arises from funders/commissioners focusing on tangible outputs (rather than outcomes) that can be easily monitored rather than looking for long-term outcomes for people and communities, which are always hard to evidence in short contract timeframes. Long-term systems of risk and reward are essential to sustaining third sector organisations with an emphasis on improving outcomes for those people for whom these services and initiatives exist in the first place.

Single-year funding has been part of the Scottish funding context for several years now and should become, for the most part, a thing of the past. Multi-year funding commitments will help to deliver a secure and sustainable future for public services and the third sector, supporting charities to demonstrate their ability to add long-term value to address shared challenges in communities. This would provide stable third sector capacity to innovate, involve people who should benefit from public investment and collaborate freely, recognising the unique value of the third sector in being close to the communities facing those challenges. This would be of particular benefit to groups facing the greatest inequalities by creating the stable capacity to build skills in the workforce to achieve good quality co-production. It would reduce the uncertainty and fragility that undermines the confidence of third sector organisations and distracts them from focusing on their purpose. Levels of need and impact would continue to be assessed and the focus of funding would be on longer-term impact and prevention.

We welcome work by Audit Scotland, working with partners, to reflect on the impact of Covid-19 on community empowerment. The Scottish Government and the third sector should co-produce with Audit Scotland, COSLA and SOLACE best practice guidance that builds upon Audit Scotland's 2019 Principles for Community Empowerment and updated National Standards for Community Engagement during and after the pandemic. This should focus on developing outcomes that are long-term, shared and with the involvement of the communities that are the intended beneficiaries. This should use the experience of Covid-19 to demonstrate the ability of the third sector to impact positively on community outcomes and to work in partnership with local authorities.

Read more about these proposals in the Third Sector policy circle [here](#).

4. Scotland's share of the Dormant Assets Fund should be used to invest in long-term support for disadvantaged communities.

The UK Government is currently considering how best to utilise dormant assets, building on earlier work with dormant bank accounts. It is not yet clear whether the UK Government will devolve Scotland's share or not. However, it is essential that these monies are devolved, as the dormant bank account money was. Building

on the Carnegie Trust's model of the 'Enabling State', this money should be used to form a new fund, providing long-term investment directly into disadvantaged communities to support them to regenerate, flourish and become more empowered to find their own solutions.

To hold government to account on this and other support for these communities, a strategic forum on disadvantaged communities at national level would be helpful. One approach to this, in the next parliamentary term, would be the establishment of a Cross-Party Group – this should be set up as soon as possible to influence national direction from the start of the new parliamentary term.

5. Purposeful cross-sector engagement and exchange opportunities should become a normalised part of career development and induction. Developing collaborative approaches that focus on change will require a high degree of trust and strong relationships. The space and capacity for these will be crucial. We can learn much from the collaboration achieved during the crisis and maximise the learning through, for example, greater use of exchange schemes and cross-sector mentoring. Understanding each other's sectors, motivations and cultures means we can build relationships and move to collaborative working at greater pace and with greater chance of success. This approach could also be expanded to help with career progression for a diverse range of analysts and officials across sectors.

6. Local Governance. The ongoing Local Governance Review must lock-in and build-upon the best of the pandemic response. Community Listening Events have told us that people have valued new and better ways of working and they do not want this to stop. New decision-making arrangements for our towns, villages and neighbourhoods could drive a culture of participation if resourced to take action and set up to be truly community-led and focused across a range of public bodies, as well as local and national government.

This will require different models and structures in different places but with the same level of ambition. If you set out what has to happen in communities and what the expectations are, then what you see is not community empowerment, it is simply a response to those expectations. We must make sure that the conditions are right so that communities can design and own their response. We should not expect to see

a one-size-fits-all approach across Scotland: arrangements will be different, but that diversity will be our strength and we should build on it.

The Review also creates the overdue opportunity to advance the principle of 'subsidiarity' – which seeks to have decision-making as close to communities as possible – across Scotland's public services. Social and economic renewal are interlinked and how we achieve both must involve building an informed consensus on what is best decided in different spheres of governance. Our communities – particularly those most socially and economically disadvantaged – must be at the heart of this reconfiguration of where control over decision-making and resources lies and we must redouble our efforts to ensure that our reach includes groups with protected characteristics and others who feel excluded. This will require specific equalities approaches and consideration of human rights.

7. The public sector must make a long-term commitment to embed place-based approaches at the heart of organisational thinking, advancing equality. Such approaches are increasingly becoming the focus of how we invest in regeneration and other local priorities across communities. To deliver real 'systems' change needs long-term commitment over at least the next 10 years, which means not just delivering long-term investment but also making sure the approach is at the heart of organisational thinking and practice. At the same time, we must ensure that place-based approaches in their design and delivery advance equality.

How the public sector fully embeds place-based approaches as a systems change should be a matter of urgent discussion and debate as we move into the next parliamentary term. In practical terms, more rapid implementation of key programmes on the ground would demonstrate commitment, as follows:

- i. **The Place-Based Investment Programme.** The Scottish Government has committed £275 million for place-based and community-led regeneration over five years. This is a very welcome start, but more place-based investment is needed, and quickly, so that places across the country can genuinely thrive post-Covid.
- ii. **20 Minute Neighbourhoods**, a concept developed in cities like Melbourne, Portland and Paris, has the aim that people should be

able to meet most of their essential needs within 20 minutes' walk, wheel or cycle from home. These principles apply not just in urban neighbourhoods, but in towns and in rural and island communities too. They should be able to benefit everyone, including older and disabled people. Being able to do our shopping, join in with leisure activities, take children to school, find local health services and ideally get to work, with greenspace on the doorstep, is a place where people want to live. A local environment that encourages active travel to promote health and wellbeing is also good for climate change. The Scottish Government has committed to do more on 20 Minute Neighbourhoods via the Programme for Government and this is welcome, but ambition here needs to be raised further. The experience of lockdown has shown us how all our lives can be improved with this type of thinking and even greater rewards are on offer if it also supports the changes needed to achieve net-zero carbon ambitions.

- iii. **Town Centre Action and Community-led Regeneration.** Separate work is underway to review the current Town Centre Action Plan so the Board has not tried to duplicate that work with additional recommendations, except to recognise the damage done to the local economies of towns by Covid-19 and to stress the importance of towns to genuine social renewal and a place-based future. This too will need significant investment.
- iv. **Community Wealth Building (CWB)** seeks to keep economic and social capital within a local area by ensuring that local people and local businesses benefit from local economic activity. For example, local procurement can increase the amount of local businesses successfully securing public sector tenders. CWB is now integral to many of Scotland's Growth Deals and there is potential for the approach to be adopted at pace across Scotland. There is real opportunity here to keep resources in local areas to benefit local people and places. It is welcome that the Scottish Government is investing here but again, we want to move quickly to build this into practice and culture across the public sector.

Place-based models in themselves do not necessarily benefit everyone without hard work to ensure all voices from the communities are embedded and included. As with other parts of service delivery, equality competence and the automatic inclusion of these voices – including

minority ethnic communities, disabled people, women and younger and older groups in leadership and decision-making - has not always occurred. Place-based approaches, as with all other aspects of renewal in this report need to take better account of these issues, embedding equalities competence. This can be achieved through increasing understanding of equality and rights, offering training, support and capacity building to local communities and partners with a common definition of place and better use of appropriate and local evidence. Engagement with organisations representing disabled people, minority ethnic, LGBTI and other equality-led groups from the very start would also help, reflecting the needs of those at highest risk of poverty.

More on these programmes and next steps can be found in the Community-Led and Place-Based Renewal Circle report, available [here](#).

CALL TO ACTION 19

Focus everyone and all activities on building more resilient, fairer, healthier and stronger communities and places

The final Call to Action in this section focuses on the importance of Place as an issue across all the recommendations set out in this report.

We must look to “ground” the benefits of the Calls to Action in this report into building stronger, more resilient, fairer and healthier communities, which meet social, climate and economic equity requirements. This means that all of us must consider how we can collaborate and focus our activities to improve opportunities and advance equality at the local level. This is as true for our island communities as it is for places in the urban central belt, whether at the village, town or city neighbourhood level, or as it is for remote and rural locations.

The pandemic has demonstrated the vital importance of community, neighbourhood and local places. There has been a tremendous effort to look after people in places and to focus efforts rapidly to help those in need. For some, the pandemic has produced new opportunities and partnerships; for others it has exacerbated existing or generated new inequalities and many have been hard hit as a result. The practical outcomes of the approaches we have set out in this report will, if implemented in full, transform the lives of these communities. But people and places are unique and lives are lived in different ways with different requirements and responsibilities. These individual circumstances are helped or hindered by how we organise society and, crucially, who is involved in this organising. Communities, neighbourhoods, districts, villages and towns are all distinct places which can deliver collaborative and collective social and economic benefit. The exact shape of this depends on the requirements of the community and the legacy on which to build. People identify with place and community; we can restore the purpose of, and pride in, this local provision.

To do this, in addition to the Calls for Action outlined in this report, there is a need for all of us to put collaboration at the local level at the forefront of our thinking. We need to use our new-found localness and the sense of coming together, that has been such a focus of the response to the pandemic, to enhance, build and redevelop our communities’ and places’ resilience. This requires new ways of organising, new methods of doing things, but also new ways of behaving. To build truly local resilient places, the voices of those in the community need to be heard from the outset. They need to be built in. Our default has to be inclusive and local. We need to stop supporting activities that damage communities and places and focus on working together to enhance shared places and facilities where all are welcome and included.

Whether it is changing our approaches to money, work, rights, housing, food, amongst a range of activities, all can have a positive impact in building better stronger, healthier and fairer communities and places, if we focus on outcomes. We’ve heard very clearly that people want to see the positive changes seen during the pandemic embedded for the long-term. We now need to make sure that the changes we demand post-pandemic make the most of the local opportunities we are creating. This is not a role for government alone, but is incumbent on all of us to alter our behaviours to make communities and places work for everyone.

5. CLOSING THE GAP BETWEEN PROMISE AND PRACTICE

This concluding section of the report identifies a final Call to Action on how the actions in this report can be taken forward.

CALL TO ACTION 20

Decision-makers must commit to co-designing the means of gauging progress towards renewal.

This Social Renewal report is a Call to Action to address the harm and hardship created by the pandemic and the underlying, deep-rooted inequalities that have blighted people's lives for too long. We do this with genuine optimism about the prospects for renewal. But we need to combine greater ambition with an unwavering commitment to following through on the implications for power, rights and decision-making. Good ideas and laws alone will not win the day.

We have set out what we believe needs to change and how we should go about it. As we say in the introduction, this is not a 'to do' list for the spheres of government or any other sector alone. Sustained renewal will only be realised when people and places have the say, power and influence they need to gain the security and opportunities consistently denied to them.

There is no blueprint for assessing Scotland's progress against our Calls to Action, but we can at least begin by asking 'how will we know?' and placing this question at the heart of the response. Closing the gap between promise and practice, to ensure good intentions result in better lives, means we must give early attention to the 'vital signs' that will tell us if we are having the impact we want to see.

That's why our final Call to Action is for decision-makers to commit to co-designing the means of measuring the progress we're making towards renewal. This means prising open the process of assessing how we are faring nationally and in local places across Scotland, leading to deeper engagement with people and communities with first-hand experience of poverty, inequality and restricted life chances. We cannot second-guess what this process will lead to, but can identify some of the essential building blocks:

- Starting with policy commitments already in

place, asking tougher questions about how they contribute to **long-term goals on climate change, child poverty and human rights**. Many good impacts may flow from investment already made, but are they the ones intended? If not, what needs to change to get there?

- Consistent use of **equalities and human rights data** to improve capacity to monitor, alongside independent evaluation of how far investment is driving renewal and for whom.
- A consistent **focus on place-based approaches** to strengthen communities, reduce inequalities and make the most of the opportunities where we live and work. Place underpins, in fundamental ways, all the Calls to Action in this report.
- Participatory approaches to the traditionally dry tasks of **measuring progress**. The National Performance Framework is a valuable asset but should become a live dashboard, informed by people's experiences as well as current outcome measures, improving our ability to strengthen effective approaches, change course and address gaps. Committing to this will generate insights which otherwise may be missed in a flurry of performance data.
- Getting back on course to enact the **prevention principles of Christie**. As we said at the start of this report, spring 2021 marks 10 years since the Christie Commission set out a compelling vision to move upstream in order to prevent harm and reduce avoidable costs locked into high-tariff services. To make sustained progress, we will need to ensure systems to drive accountability - design, investment, audit and evaluation - never lose sight of this purpose and are aligned towards genuine progress.

Finally, the prospect of half the population receiving one of the three current Covid-19

vaccines by May, and a new parliamentary term starting then too, gives us an opportunity to have some hope that soon we will be able to genuinely start anew. So we need to start preparing now. Now is the moment – because if not now, when?

ANNEX A - BOARD MEMBERSHIP

With the exception of representatives from COSLA and SOLACE, members of the Board were not invited as representative of their organisations or sectors, but in recognition of the individual contribution they could make.

The Board was chaired for the first phase of its work by Aileen Campbell MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government and Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People.

Cllr Alison Evison, President, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities also attended Board meetings during the first phase, with Cllr Elena Whitham also participating on an occasional basis.

Tressa Burke, Chief Executive Officer of Glasgow Disability Alliance, Depute Chair of Ministerial Expert Group - Disability and Carers' Benefits Expert Advisory Group, member of National PB Strategic Group and member of the First Minister's National Advisory Council on Women and Girls

Eileen Cawley, Administrator/Development Officer at the Scottish Pensioners Forum and Member of the Scottish Government Cross Party Group on Older People, Age and Ageing, the Cross Party Group on Funerals and Bereavement and the Older People's Strategic Action Forum

Etienne d'Aboville, Chief Executive of the Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living and member of the Scottish Government's Disability and Carers' Benefits Expert Advisory Group

Lindsay Graham, Member of the Poverty and Inequality Commission and member of the Scotland Committee of National Lottery

Angela O'Hagan, Reader in Equalities and Public Policy and Deputy Director of the Wise Centre for Economic Justice at Glasgow Caledonian University; Chair of the Scottish Government Equalities Budget Advisory Group

Anna Fowlie, Chief Executive of Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations

Fiona Lees, Chief Executive of East Ayrshire Council and representing Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE)

Louise Macdonald, Chief Executive of Young Scot and Co-Chair of the First Minister's National Advisory Council on Women and Girls

Lisa Maclean, Chief Executive of Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn

Jim McCormick, Chief Executive of the Robertson Trust and Chair of the Edinburgh Poverty Commission

Neil McInroy, Chief Executive of the Centre for Local Economic Strategies

Susan McPhee, Formerly of Citizens Advice Scotland

Satwat Rehman, Director of One Parent Families Scotland and member of the First Minister's Advisory Council on Women and Girls

Emma Ritch, Executive Director of Engender and member of the First Minister's Advisory Council on Women and Girls

Bill Scott, Senior Policy Advisor at Inclusion Scotland and Chair of the Poverty and Inequality Commission

Maureen Sier, Director of Interfaith Scotland and trustee of the Interfaith Network for the UK (IFN)

Leigh Sparks, Deputy Principal and Professor of Retail Studies at University of Stirling, Chair of Scotland's Towns Partnership

Jon Sparkes, Chief Executive of Crisis and a member of Scottish Government's Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group. Also a member of the UK Government's Rough Sleeping Advisory Panel, and previously Chair of both the Scottish Government's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group and the Welsh Government's Homelessness Action Group

Sally Thomas, Chief Executive Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, member of the Homelessness Prevention Strategy Group and the Stewarding Group of Scotland's Climate Assembly

Sabir Zazai, Chief Executive of Scottish Refugee Council

ANNEX B - LIVED EXPERIENCE AT THE HEART

In ensuring that lived experience was right at the heart of discussions on social renewal, the Board developed a programme of engagement to ensure people and communities (of place and of interest) and organisations supporting people affected by the issues can have their say and contribute their ideas. This has consisted of four strands which are outlined below. A full report, containing summaries of all these different elements, is available [here](#).

1. Poverty Truth Commission

We have consulted with the Poverty Truth Commissions who represent four local authority areas. The groups bring together those with lived experience of poverty and inequality with local decision-makers in order to effect change. The questions focused on what impact lockdown had on their lives, the struggles and positive changes and also what their ambitions were for a good life post-Covid. The responses, which were compiled into a report and shared with the Board, helped confirm that the issues being considered by the circles were the same as those people were experiencing generally.

2. Community Listening Events

We supported Community Listening Events undertaken in 31 local authorities. These offered local people a chance to reflect on what had changed for them, how lockdown had affected their lives and what their priorities were for a 'good life' post-Covid-19, which could be incorporated into the thinking of the Board.

3. Deep Dive Events

We commissioned a series of "Deep Dive" events with groups who have been disproportionately affected by Covid-19 - disabled people, minority ethnic communities, older people, women, and young people. Unfortunately, capacity issues within the commissioned organisation meant that the minority ethnic Deep Dives weren't able to progress as planned. We were required to use other evidence instead, including the two sets of recommendations from the [Expert Reference Group on Covid-19 and Ethnicity](#) and reports such as [The Impacts Of Covid-19 On Equality In Scotland](#) and [Scotland's Wellbeing: The Impact of COVID-19 | National Performance Framework](#). The remaining Deep Dives were able to take place as planned and these have informed the development of the Calls to Action emerging from the policy circles.

4. Call for Ideas

This open call asked national organisations and local community groups for their policy ideas, proposals and solutions on how to renew post-Covid. It was also a further opportunity to gather evidence about the impacts on the pandemic. The response to Covid-19 saw unparalleled partnership working across groups to keep people safe, happy and fed. The Board wanted to make the most of this learning, which was done at pace and delivered tangible outcomes in areas where it had been more difficult to make progress previously.

ANNEX C – BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS IN PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT 2020-21

The Scottish Government's Programme for Government (PfG) 2020-21, [Protecting Scotland Renewing Scotland](#) which was published in September 2020 commits Scottish Ministers to take forward a range of proposals presented by the Social Renewal Advisory Board.

Here is the Scottish Government's response to the Board's recommendations from Phase One.

On **Place**, the Board asked the Scottish Government to strengthen the role of place-making in policy development to encourage collaborative working and support community-led regeneration with strong local involvement. Place-based approaches are at the heart of the Scottish Government's forward programme, with commitments to '20 Minute Neighbourhoods', Community Wealth Building and a Place-Based Investment Programme. PfG has committed to invest £275 million over five years to support community-led regeneration and town-centre revitalisation, including the repurposing of buildings, maintenance and repairs, reallocating external space and community-led land acquisition. This will also support the ongoing work on Clyde Gateway.

On **Communities**, community anchor organisations – like housing associations and community development trusts – have been crucial to the response to Covid: the Board recommended that the Scottish Government should continue to support community anchors to provide essential services with communities, as it was felt to be a particularly beneficial approach. We therefore commit to using our Empowering Communities Programme to build on the learning from the Covid-19 response and support wider adoption and strengthening of the community anchor model. To do this, we will develop a national framework that supports community capacity and resilience, which will help ensure readiness for any future crisis, and will engage with stakeholders, including equality groups, on this going forward.

On **Housing**, the Board asked the Scottish Government to do more to make full use of the existing and planned housing stock to provide homes for as many people as possible, including addressing a current shortfall in adaptations which are needed to enable people

to stay in their homes for longer or return after hospitalisation. We have now committed to review the current housing adaptations system and make recommendations on how best to improve and streamline the system and maximise the impact of investment.

The Board also asked us to review existing design standards and guidance to drive improvement and innovation across all tenures – we have already done so for the social rented sector and have an ambition to do the same for other tenures.

The Board recommended that we strengthen guidance on discretionary housing payments, and this we are now doing, taking into account the need to support our work to tackle and prevent homelessness: stakeholders will be consulted on this guidance before it is finalised.

The Board also recommended a commitment to permanently prevent a return to previous levels of rough sleeping in all areas and continue to strengthen our national plan for ending homelessness – we commit to both these within this Programme for Government.

On **Social Security**, the Board has asked for more work to promote benefit take up and to make a benefits eligibility checker available online. This we commit to do, considering which benefits need specific attention and how we can use intermediaries and online content to strengthen our approach.

A further recommendation was to embed Scotland's Social Security principles and human rights-based approach within the local authority level benefits and payments system and we will explore how to take that forward with COSLA.

The Board also asked the Scottish Government and COSLA to work together to build on good practice in relation to automation of payment of local level benefits/payments and to consider a national approach where possible. Automation ensures that all those who are eligible receive support and introduces efficiencies to local authority practice. To support local authorities to implement innovative approaches, we will work with the Take-up Stakeholder Reference Group and Income Maximisation Strategic Working Group – which include representatives of COSLA

and local authorities – to develop guidance and resources on best practice.

Additionally, it is widely recognised that one of the main barriers to automation is the requirement to access and manage data appropriately. We therefore commit to working with COSLA to make a joint application to the UK Government's Public Service Delivery Review Board to enable existing legislation to be amended, which would provide local authority partners with access to DWP and HMRC data for the purposes of awarding local level benefits and payments (free school meals, school clothing grants and educational maintenance allowances) – all of which are key to alleviating the impacts of child and family poverty and supporting attendance and learning within education.

Tackling debt is another priority area for action, as the pandemic continues. We are making £2.4 million ring-fenced funding available for debt advice, focusing on innovative and inventive approaches. We are also working with AdviceUK to support smaller-scale, local projects run by its members across Scotland.

Alongside the actions in our Debt Advice Routemap, we will support the debt and broader advice sector to develop a 'multi-channel' approach to advice with phone, online, face to face, and outside of working hours options.

Accessible and affordable credit is key to managing money, particularly for those on low incomes, and another issue where the Board made recommendations. We will work with Carnegie UK Trust and the Affordable Credit Working Group to promote affordable credit and to help people reduce unaffordable debt and arrears. We will consider what more the sector could do and alternative sources of help to augment this, such as from housing associations or employers.

On **Fair Work**, the Board recommended that we make it easier for employers to support older and disabled workers. We have established a Public Social Partnership to develop and test solutions to barriers employers face in hiring and retaining disabled people, and are scoping a new Centre for Workplace Transformation. We will consult with equality groups on this – a key focus of the Centre's work will be how employers can ensure older and disabled employees, for example, can access, sustain and re-train in quality jobs.

Lived experience was also flagged as key to effective policy development issues for age and disability groups, amongst others. We are committed to embedding lived experience across employability services, which is important if existing labour market inequalities are to be addressed, building on the input from disabled people to [A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People: Employment Action Plan](#). We are fully committed to implementing the Action Plan and published our Year 1 Progress Report in March 2020, outlining progress to date in meeting the commitment to at least halve the disability employment gap. We have reviewed proposed activity for this year to ensure it is prioritised to align with Scottish Government's post-Covid recovery efforts.

The Board highlighted the importance of flexible working. PfG sets out how we are investing over £130,000 in 2020-21 to support the development of a network for flexible working with Timewise, a leading social enterprise in this field. The network will provide support to employers and employability advisers on how to encourage and adopt flexible working as a way to increase individual incomes, with a particular focus on the Scottish Government's 'priority families' within our child poverty work. This means a strong focus on equality considerations – age, disability, race and gender, for example – in policy development as this progresses.

The Board also recommended expanding the scale and reach of investment in training and skills with a focus on those most at risk of poverty. We are making progress on our No One Left Behind agenda which aims to support those facing the biggest barriers to employment, including lone parents, disabled people and minority ethnic communities. We will develop and align employability services and upskilling/reskilling opportunities through the expansion of the Flexible Workforce Development Fund, which is expected to meet a range of equality outcomes and the Parental Employability Support Fund, both of which can support women's employability and our efforts on child poverty. We have announced additional investment of £100 million in employability and skills, with at least £60 million intended to support a Youth Guarantee, focusing on the most disadvantaged young people. We are also providing £10 million for a range of measures to recruit and retain apprentices and £25 million for a National Transition Training Fund to provide rapid, high quality and targeted support for up to 10,000 people facing redundancy and unemployment in those sectors and regions most exposed to a downturn.

On **Food**, the Board raised the issue of food insecurity in school holidays – a problem addressed during the pandemic by continuing to fund free school meal entitlements over the Easter and summer breaks. We commit to exploring with COSLA what more can be done here and anticipate that this will be discussed further in the Board's final report.

In response to the Board's focus on community food partnerships, we recognise that coordinated partnership working in response to Covid-19 has brought together the strengths of different sectors; we will work with the Board to consider how this can be further developed going forward.

On **Digital Inclusion**, the Board asked that we invest in digital access, connectivity and skills to enable participation across communities of place and interest. The PfG has announced a significant additional investment in Connecting Scotland. By the end of 2021, we will have provided a digital device, unlimited data, and two years of ongoing support and training to around 50,000 low-income families with children, disabled people, young people leaving care, and others who experience disadvantage. Note that this is a significant increase on the numbers announced in the most recent annual Tackling Child Poverty Statement, which committed to lifting 30,000 people from digital exclusion.

On **Inclusive Communication**, the Board recommended work should be undertaken within Scottish Government and the wider public sector to promote accessible, inclusive communications for all - ensuring everyone can access information on an equal basis.

On **Third Sector**, the Board asked that issues of Parity of Esteem are recognised and addressed. Further related challenges of unnecessary bureaucratic barriers and the need for longer-term funding arrangements were highlighted. To realise this, a focal point to our commitment will be a programme to "Strengthen Collaboration" between the Scottish Government, Local Government and the third sector in the first instance, and expanded to the rest of the public sector in time. This will be co-produced and backed up by improvement and accountability approaches, with the aim to build wider understanding of the sector and its potential, to develop new leadership exchanges and build skills and confidence in collaboration based on best practice from the crisis.

ANNEX D – OTHER ADVISORY GROUPS ON RENEWAL

[The Expert Reference Group on Covid-19 and Ethnicity](#) was set up by the Scottish Government to consider and inform the approach in relation to the impacts of Covid-19 on minority ethnic communities. The Group, made up of academics and other expert advisers alongside Scottish Government officials, is co-chaired by Dr Ima Jackson and Prof Vittal Katikireddi, with Paul Johnston (Director General of Local Government and Communities) acting as senior sponsor. The Minister for Older People and Equalities also sits on the group. The Expert Reference Group contributed significantly to the Scottish Government's emerging approach, and continues to advise on proposed actions to mitigate the harms felt by minority ethnic communities in relation to Covid-19. It published a set of recommendations on ethnicity data and on systemic issues in September 2020, with the Scottish Government responding in November 2020.

[The Advisory Group on Economic Recovery](#) was established in April 2020. The remit of the Group was to provide expert advice on Scotland's economic recovery once the immediate emergency, created by coronavirus, has subsided. Specifically the Group was asked to advise on the economic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic, including measures to support different sectoral and regional challenges the economy will face in recovery. In addition, it was asked to consider how business practice will change as a result of coronavirus, including opportunities to operate differently and how Government policy can help the transition towards a greener, net-zero and wellbeing economy. The Advisory Group's Report 'Towards a Robust Wellbeing Economy for Scotland' was published on 22 June 2020 and the Scottish Government response to the report entitled 'Economic Recovery Implementation Plan' was published on 5 August 2020.

[Scottish Technology Ecosystem Review](#) - In May 2020, Mark Logan was commissioned by Kate Forbes, Cabinet Secretary for Finance, to undertake a short-life review into how Scotland's technology sector can contribute to the country's economic recovery after the Covid-19 pandemic. The review's 34 recommendations are primarily concerned with stimulating and accelerating the maturity of Scotland's "Technology Ecosystem".

This means the system, in its widest sense, that supports and nurtures technology businesses in Scotland, from the early start-up phase through to fully scaled maturity.

[Covid-19 Education Recovery Group](#) - The Group, co-chaired by the Deputy First Minister and the COSLA Children and Young People spokesperson, brings together decision-makers and key influencers to ensure that the delivery of childcare, early learning and education maintains a strong focus on excellence and equity for all, within the necessary constraints of the Covid-19 response. It provides leadership and advice to ministers and local government leaders in developing the strategic approach to the response and recovery of the early learning and childcare and education system. It works across organisational and structural boundaries to support the response and recovery efforts. consider and provide advice on any proposed changes in Scottish education strategy, taking into account any long-term effects of the Covid-19 response. It is a forum for frank and open discussion about what is working and what and where more improvement is required.

The Sustainable Renewal Advisory Group was convened by Roseanna Cunningham, Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform, to discuss actions relating to climate change and a green recovery from Covid-19. Members discussed the new challenges Scotland is facing as a result of the pandemic, as well as the opportunities for a green recovery; rebuilding our economy in a way that delivers a greener, fairer and more equal society. The group brings together a broad range of experts from across society, including MSPs, business and industry representatives, trade-unions, eNGOs and academics. Members are able to use the space to discuss tangible policy deliverables to meet the climate change targets set by Parliament, as well as our wider objectives for wellbeing, the economy and equality. The Group has discussed a variety of topics, including green finance, just transition, the recommendations of the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery and Deep Dives on energy, natural capital, place and transport. Social renewal and wellbeing have been crucial themes in discussion. Members have emphasised the importance of a just transition; a recovery that ensures that the risks are managed

and that our transition is fair and ethical. The pandemic has shown how abrupt and unplanned shifts can exacerbate inequalities. Now, more than ever, we need a just transition that supports sustainable economic growth and jobs, whilst ensuring no one is left behind. This includes helping to reduce wider inequalities on issues such as fuel poverty, protecting and generating employment opportunities, and to avoid passing unnecessary costs or disruption to consumers.



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