

BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC CHILD POVERTY IN SCOTLAND:

A REVIEW OF THE LOCAL CHILD POVERTY ACTION REPORTS 2020/21

COALITION FOR RACIAL EQUALITY
AND RIGHTS, OCTOBER 2022



CRER
coalition for racial
equality and rights



Who We Are

The Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights is a Scottish anti-racism charity based in Glasgow. We are focused on working to eliminate racial discrimination and harassment, and promote racial justice across Scotland.

Our key mission is to:

- Protect, enhance, and promote the rights of minority ethnic communities across all areas of life in Scotland; and,
- Strengthen the social, economic, and political capital of minority ethnic communities, especially those at greatest risk of disadvantage

CRER takes a rights-based approach, promoting relevant international, regional, and national human rights and equality conventions and legislation.

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CRER is a charity registered in Scotland (Sc029007)

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Introduction

In Scotland, Black and minority ethnic (BME) people are twice as likely to experience poverty as white Scottish/British people. Following from this, minority ethnic children represent a disproportionate number of children in poverty. The COVID-19 pandemic worsened this as BME groups were severely economically impacted and so continue to struggle with living in poverty. The current cost of living crisis will exacerbate this problem and BME communities will continue to be negatively affected by these issues, with the outcome being more BME families and children living in poverty.

Scottish Government statistics show that, in 2020, 38% of children from minority ethnic families were in relative poverty with 34% in absolute poverty.¹ However, statistics from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) suggest that it could be as high as 48% in relative poverty.²

In an effort to address child poverty, the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 sets targets to reduce the number of children experiencing the effects of poverty by 2030.³ The following targets must be met:

- Fewer than 10% of children living in families in relative poverty⁴
- Fewer than 5% of children living in families in absolute poverty⁵
- Fewer than 5% of children living in families living in combined low income and material deprivation⁶

¹ Scottish Government National Statistics (2021) **Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland 2017-2020**. Available at: https://data.gov.scot/poverty/2021/#Key_trends (Accessed: 29th September 2022).

² Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2021) **Ethnicity, poverty and the data in Scotland**. Available at: [Ethnicity, poverty, and the data in Scotland | JRF](#) (Accessed 12 September 2022). These statistics measure slightly different groups – something that will be discussed later.

³ **Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017**. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2017/6/contents/enacted> (Accessed 18 August 2022).

⁴ Relative poverty is defined by the Scottish Government as a household with an income below 60% of the UK median income in the same year (after housing costs). This way, it measures whether those in the lowest income households are keeping pace with the growth of incomes in the economy as a whole. Scottish Government 'Poverty in Scotland: Methodology'. Available at: [Poverty definition - Poverty in Scotland: methodology - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#) (Accessed: 15 August 2022).

⁵ A household is in absolute poverty if its income is below the poverty threshold from 2010/11. It measures whether the incomes of the poorest households are keeping pace with rising prices.

⁶ Combined material deprivation and low income consists of those living in a household with below 70% of median incomes in that year, plus where parents want but cannot afford specific goods or services (such as a holiday away from home once a year, or bedrooms for every child aged 10+ of a different gender). This indicator aims to provide a measure of children's living standards which, unlike relative and absolute poverty, is not solely based on income.

- Fewer than 5% of children living in families in persistent poverty⁷

There are also interim targets to be met by 2023 that lay out the first step towards reducing the numbers of children experiencing poverty.

The Act requires that each Local Authority and relevant Health Board publishes an annual report on their progress and plans to continue to tackle child poverty locally and meet the targets, known as a Local Child Poverty Action Report. These reports have been published yearly since 2019, with the 2020/21 being the third annual publication.

This report looks at the Local Child Poverty Action Reports (LCPARs), published in 2020/2021 by Local Authorities outlining what they have done to tackle poverty and their actions going forward.

⁷ Persistent poverty identifies individuals who live in relative poverty (have a household income of less than 60% of the UK median) for at least three years out of the last four.

Key Findings:

- Most LCPARs lacked any focus on race, despite the known links between ethnicity and poverty in Scotland
- Where there was consideration of race and poverty, minority ethnic families were often only one of multiple priority groups that action was aimed at, rather than having any specific, targeted action. Such plans generally contained a lack of information about current actions to address BME child poverty and far less detail about their actual or predicated impact
- A significant number of LCPARs which mentioned race and poverty focus primarily on one group i.e. Gypsy/Travellers. Whilst focus on this group is essential due to the extremely high levels of poverty recorded in Scotland,⁸ Local Authorities should ensure they are considering all BME groups in the area
- Whilst the majority of Local Authorities acknowledged the higher risk of poverty for Black and minority ethnic families, this did not necessarily lead to action. Seven Local Authorities acknowledged the higher poverty rates, but did not discuss any action targeted at BME families
- Issues with data availability at the national level are reflected and exacerbated at the local level. These issues hinder close analysis of BME communities' experiences with poverty and prevent an understanding of the effects and impact of anti-poverty measures on these communities

⁸ Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) (2019) **Improving the lives of Gypsy/Travellers: 2019-2021**. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/improving-lives-scotlands-gypsy-travellers-2019-2021/> (Accessed 6 October 2022).

Local Child Poverty Action Reports Context

LCPARs are an important acknowledgment of the crucial role that local level organisations and actions can have in reducing child poverty. Local Authorities are on the frontline of tackling various issues, including around employment and housing for their communities. Local Councils and Health Boards can narrow in on specific inequalities and put in place approaches that target vulnerable groups and work to address their specific issues.

The Child Poverty Act states that LCPARs must describe measures taken or proposed to be taken “in relation to children living in households whose income is adversely affected, or whose expenditure is increased, because a member of the household has one or more protected characteristics”.⁹ Specific action that focuses on the barriers faced by families with protected characteristics, including minority ethnic families, must therefore be detailed in the LCPARs. However, while this does compel Local Authorities to report measures targeted at families with protected characteristics, it does not require them to actually take such actions - it merely requires that they discuss any measures they have taken or propose to take. Nevertheless, this encouragement, along with the Scottish Government’s inclusion of minority ethnic families as one of the six priority groups within anti-poverty policy, does place pressure on Local Authorities to produce their anti-poverty strategies with a particular focus on race.

The Scottish Government has published two action plans for tackling child poverty for the years 2018-22 and 2022-26. These outline new policies and proposals and are structured around the three main drivers of child poverty: income from work and earnings, costs of living and income from social security.

⁹ **Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017**. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2017/6/contents/enacted>. (Accessed 15th August). This requirement was included due to CRER’s work with Jackie Baillie MSP to amend the bill <https://www.crer.org.uk/policy-parliamentary-engagement>

In the 2018-2022 plan,¹⁰ the Scottish Government lists the initial process of meeting their targets on child poverty including identifying six priority family groups which are at greater risk of poverty:

- Disabled person in household
- 3+ children in household
- Baby aged under 1 in household
- Minority ethnic household
- Lone parent household
- Mother aged under 25

These groups face particular barriers outwith their control that lead to many becoming trapped in poverty, and together they make up the majority of families living in poverty. In minority ethnic families 38% of children are living in relative poverty. This demonstrates the need for action that is targeted at these families to ensure that everything is being done to lower the level of BME children living in poverty.

The 2022-26 plan reiterates the commitment to the 2030 targets and lists the six priority family groups as the continued focus of anti-poverty measures.¹¹ It considers the progress made since the first delivery plan and lays out the key actions for the next few years which include support for parents entering work, maximising support available for families and improving childcare options.¹²

To consider what is being done to address the high levels of BME poverty and reach the 2030 targets, CRER have analysed the LCPARs for 2020/21, one of the frontlines of anti-poverty strategies, to understand:

- The level of data, quantitative or qualitative, which exists at local levels on BME child poverty
- The extent of acknowledgment or reference to the higher rates of child poverty among BME communities
- What targeted action exists, or is planned, to address BME child poverty locally, and

¹⁰ Scottish Government (2018) 'Every child, every chance: tackling child poverty delivery plan 2018-2022'. Available at [Supporting documents - Every child, every chance: tackling child poverty delivery plan 2018-2022 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/every-child-every-chance-tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-2018-2022/documents/) (Accessed 15 August 2022).

¹¹ Scottish Government (2022) **Best Start, Bright Futures: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026**. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/best-start-bright-futures-tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-2022-26/documents/> Accessed (16 September 2022).

¹² Ibid.

- The impact of any previous actions or plans to reduce BME child poverty

In order to do this, this report looks at the context in terms of both national policy on child poverty and research undertaken about the link between ethnicity and child poverty. We have also briefly analysed any Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) which accompanied the local reports and whether these address the impact of anti-poverty measures on BME groups.

Due to the relatively higher BME population in Glasgow, there is a specific section on their LCPAR, looking at what action is being taken there.

Reviewing the LCPARs

In 2019, the first year of the Local Child Poverty Action Reports, the Poverty and Inequality Commission¹³ reviewed 10 action reports to consider their work.¹⁴ The reports were chosen at random, and the Local Authorities were not named. A number of recommendations were made by the Commission as a result of their review, including:

- Where appropriate, the action plans should do more to articulate why priority groups are the targets of particular actions
- Local authorities and health boards should consider how they can better involve people with direct lived experience. They should ensure that people's voices are heard and helping to shape agendas
- Local authorities and health boards could review their use of data

The review did not go into depth on the priority groups and there was therefore little analysis about whether the priority groups were being adequately considered and targeted. The Commission intended to look over samples of the reports in the following year to assess how they have improved, something that has not yet been published. When further review of local plans is completed, it would be useful for focus and impact on priority groups to be considered as part of this.

In addition, the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit is due to produce a review of the year two (2020) Local Child Poverty Action Reports in 2022.¹⁵ This review should also consider whether enough is being done to target actions at the priority groups and if the impact of such actions is being assessed.

¹³ The Poverty and Inequality Commission is an advisory non-departmental public body which provides independent advice and scrutiny to Scottish ministers on poverty and inequality. Available at: [What we do - Poverty & Inequality Commission \(povertyinequality.scot\)](https://www.povertyinequality.scot.nhs.uk/what-we-do) Accessed (16 September 2022).

¹⁴ The Poverty and Inequality Commission (2019) **Poverty and Inequality Commission's Review of the Local Child Poverty Action Reports 2019**. Available at: [Poverty-and-Inequality-Commission-review-of-the-local-child-poverty-action-reports.pdf \(povertyinequality.scot\)](https://www.povertyinequality.scot.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Poverty-and-Inequality-Commission-review-of-the-local-child-poverty-action-reports.pdf) (Accessed 27 September 2022).

¹⁵ Audit Scotland (2022) **Briefing: Tackling Child Poverty**. Available at: [Briefing: Tackling child poverty | Audit Scotland \(audit-scotland.gov.uk\)](https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/briefing-tackling-child-poverty) (Accessed 27 September 2022).

Research on Poverty and Ethnicity

In recent years the relationship between ethnicity and poverty in Scotland has been considered in a few research publications. Issues around employment, housing and education and the racial discrimination faced in these areas mean that BME communities are more likely to live in poverty than their white counterparts.

CRER's report on Ethnicity and Poverty in Scotland, published in 2020,¹⁶ highlighted the unique barriers that BME people face with employment, housing and education. These barriers mean that minority ethnic groups are particularly likely to experience poverty induced by housing costs and employment difficulties.

The report found that:

- There are higher rates of relative and absolute poverty for BME households compared to white Scottish/British households
- Across all child poverty measures, rates of poverty in minority ethnic families have risen in recent years, and they appeared to be the only one of the child poverty priority groups for whom poverty is still rising
- Unemployment rates are consistently higher amongst BME groups than for the majority white Scottish group. There are also variations between different BME groups
- Higher rates of self-employment found amongst BME communities are potentially linked to greater levels of poverty and may be due to difficulties in finding salaried employment
- Minority ethnic groups are particularly likely to experience housing cost induced poverty and are overrepresented in the private renting sector, which has well documented connections with poverty
- Addressing child poverty in minority ethnic families will require attention to the particular barriers that BME people face in employment, childcare, and the cost of living

CRER's research has shown that ambitious plans are required to reduce child poverty amongst minority ethnic communities and therefore it could be

¹⁶ Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (2020) **Ethnicity and Poverty in Scotland**. Available at: (Accessed 29th September 2022). [CRER Publications — CRER](#)

expected that each Local Authority's Local Child Poverty Action Plan will show such measures and how they will benefit BME children.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation's report, 'Ethnicity, poverty and the data in Scotland', published in 2021 highlights that minority ethnic people are at significantly higher risk of poverty than their white counterparts.¹⁷ The report states that workers from minority ethnic backgrounds have higher underemployment rates than workers from white backgrounds and are more likely to be on insecure work contracts. They are also more likely to be paid less. These issues, among others, increase the likelihood of minority ethnic workers being in poverty and contribute to the high rate of child poverty among minority ethnic communities.

The report also looks at data availability in relation to ethnicity and poverty in Scotland. It concludes that a lack of robust data on ethnicity and poverty makes it hard to understand the drivers of poverty for people from minority ethnic backgrounds.

In 2011, JRF wrote of the opportunities that the linking of data (including Census data and Department for Work and Pensions administrative data) would allow for a better understanding of the drivers of poverty for minority ethnic people in Scotland.¹⁸ However, no obvious progress on this has been made in the past ten years.

The Poverty Alliance's Scottish Anti-Poverty Review included a piece in their most recent publication about issues of data on poverty and ethnicity in Scotland and its link to the LCPARs.¹⁹ Professor John McKendrick highlights the problem of a lack of data but also argues that this must not be used as an excuse for inaction around BME child poverty, as its severity means that it must be tackled with urgency.

Current research demonstrates the ways in which minority ethnic families are disproportionately affected by poverty. The Scottish Government and Local Authorities must work to reverse these rising levels of child poverty amongst people from minority ethnic backgrounds.

¹⁷ Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2021) **Ethnicity, poverty and the data in Scotland**. Available at: [Ethnicity, poverty, and the data in Scotland | JRF](#) (Accessed 12 September 2022).

¹⁸ Gina Netto et al. (2011) **A Review of Poverty and Ethnicity in Scotland**. Available at: <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/review-poverty-and-ethnicity-scotland> (Accessed 29th September 2022).

¹⁹ McKendrick, John. (2022) 'Only an excuse: Beyond the paucity of data on 'poverty and ethnicity' in Scotland', **Scottish Anti Poverty Review**, 37.

The research also discusses the problems of a lack of high quality data that severely hinders anti-poverty work for BME groups. Previous anti-poverty measures (which tend to take a race-blind approach) have not been successful at reducing poverty for minority ethnic communities. Therefore, going forward, action must be targeted to the unique barriers and structural disadvantages that minority ethnic communities face. LCPARs must contain robust, focused strategies in relation to, for example, housing, income from employment and income from benefits that reduce local BME poverty.

Alongside this, the Scottish Government recently changed who they included in their measurement of poverty within the minority ethnic families priority group. In previous years this included Black, Asian, mixed/multiple ethnicities and 'other' ethnic households but it now also includes households from a white-other background in the minority ethnic category. This means that statistics for BME child poverty rates are no longer available; this is despite higher poverty risk and the known connections between racism, discrimination and poverty. It is no longer possible to look at trend data for BME child poverty levels.²²

Additionally, the data will now potentially be wrongly interpreted as demonstrating an (artificial) decrease in poverty levels for BME children, as poverty levels within white minority groups are generally lower than for BME groups; this may skew priorities for tackling poverty. This is perhaps a clear example of racism in data collection and policy work as BME people are effectively rendered invisible within the data, with no way to differentiate by ethnicity.

Further to this, there is currently no data on local levels of BME child poverty which makes it difficult to pinpoint the areas where targeted action is most urgently needed. This is especially critical as across Scotland there is an uneven geographical share of BME people, resulting in an uneven share of BME child poverty. Without such data to clarify these differentiations, local action plans may struggle to appropriately understand and therefore address the needs of BME families.

Whilst child poverty can be found everywhere, there is an uneven spread of child poverty geographically across Scotland. The highest levels are found in areas in Glasgow and Dundee. In these Local Authorities, planning and action against poverty is of particular importance. See Appendix 1 for data on the varying levels of child poverty in Scotland.

CRER has looked at the 2021 Pupil Census to grasp a sense of the distribution of BME children across Scotland. This allows for an up-to-date picture of the spread of BME pupils (and therefore families) across Scotland. Glasgow, East Renfrewshire and Edinburgh have the highest rates of BME pupils with 1 in 4

²² See this graph by Glasgow Centre for Population Health as an example of this issue: https://www.understandingglasgow.com/child_poverty_priority_groups

school pupils in Glasgow being from a minority ethnic family.²³ The Orkney Islands, North Ayrshire and Dumfries and Galloway have less than 3% BME pupils across their schools.²⁴ A full list of the percentages of BME pupils in each Local Authority can be found in Appendix 2.

Large differences in the percentages of BME pupils across Scotland should result in more coverage of BME families in local anti-poverty strategies in specific Local Authority areas, such as Glasgow and Edinburgh. Clear and robust data on child poverty levels for BME groups would allow us to understand the nature, causes and consequences of poverty amongst BME communities in Scotland and without this evidence base, current anti-poverty strategies will be ineffective at addressing this poverty. In Scottish Government action plans and in each LCPAR there should be a commitment to record and gather data on ethnicity and poverty.

²³ Scottish Government (2022) **Pupil census: supplementary statistics**. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/pupil-census-supplementary-statistics/> (Accessed: 22 August 2022).

²⁴ Ibid.

Local Child Poverty Action Reports 2020/21

CRER analysed all LCPARs submitted by Local Authorities in 2021. This was done in order to see the attention paid to minority ethnic child poverty at local levels, to highlight good practice where found and identify gaps and areas for improvement.

Scottish Government guidance for writing LCPARs lists the steps required to develop the report.²⁵ Relevant to this report, step two says that ‘It is critical for local partners to understand child poverty in their area in order to be able to tailor their support to help’. Additionally, the final step of the guidance stresses that ‘the report must provide evidence that it has considered the different barriers that parents with different protected characteristics may face, as well as specifically including action to help parents maximise income.’ With these aims in mind, CRER has considered the effectiveness and impact of the LCPARs.

CRER’s analysis counted each mention of race, minority ethnic families and refugees and asylum seekers across all 26 LCPARs.²⁶ The most mentions occur in the Perth and Kinross and Renfrewshire reports, each containing 12 mentions. Two Local Authorities, Aberdeen City and East Ayrshire, reports do not discuss race or minority ethnic families at all.

In other reports, there tended to be little discussion of issues affecting or actions planned relating to minority ethnic families. The lack of acknowledgment of race and the ways in which BME children are disproportionately vulnerable to poverty in the majority of LCPARs is a clear indicator of how minority ethnic families are routinely sidelined in local anti-poverty plans.

Most, but not all, of the reports mentioned the six priority groups, with minority ethnic families being one of these, outlining the framework as written in the Scottish Government Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plans. There was frequent reference to 38% of minority ethnic families living in relative poverty and 34% living in absolute poverty nationally. However, the provision of this statistic did not guarantee that the report would include concrete measures targeted at minority ethnic families. Indeed, seven Local Authorities

²⁵ Scottish Government (2018). **Developing A Local Child Poverty Action Report: Guidance**. Available at: [Local child poverty action report: guidance - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/consultation-papers/collections/documents/Local-Child-Poverty-Action-Report-Guidance.pdf) (Accessed: 26 September 2022).

²⁶ Only 26 of the 32 Local Authorities published LCPARs for the year 2020/21.

acknowledged the higher poverty rates for minority ethnic individuals, but did not discuss any action targeted at BME families.

Targeted Actions

The focus of many of the measures centres on provisions for Gypsy/Traveller families. Five Local Authorities mentioned action targeted at Gypsy/Traveller families. For example, Argyll and Bute outlined council work to improve Duncholgan and Bayview Gypsy/Traveller sites²⁷ and Aberdeenshire has established a skills retraining fund for Gypsy/Travellers.²⁸ Many reports mentioned improving digital inclusion through the provision of internet access and devices to 'vulnerable' families, often Gypsy/Traveller families and families with English as a second language.

Measures that would benefit refugee/asylum seeking families were referenced by eight Local Authorities. Clackmannanshire and Inverclyde are two examples where devices have been allocated to Syrian refugee families and families where English is a second language.²⁹ Edinburgh Council's Lifelong Learning Service, alongside supporting families with English as a second language to access online learning from schools, also provides an online resettlement programme for 70 refugees.³⁰ West Dunbartonshire references its support of the Refugee Re-settlement Programme to obtain funding for creche support.³¹

Other LCPARs do not target their focus at specific BME groups but rather seek to address the issues of all minority ethnic families. For example, Renfrewshire Council's report mentions Engage Renfrewshire's events targeted at the 'BAME community' to start conversations around participants' experiences during the

²⁷ Argyll and Bute Council (2021) **Argyll and Bute Child Poverty Action Plan Review 2020-21**. Available at: [final_child_poverty_action_plan_review_2020-2021.003.pdf \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/media/14401/5362-Child-local-poverty-action-report2021-FINAL.pdf) (Accessed 16 August 2022).

²⁸ Aberdeenshire Council (2021) **Child Poverty Local Action Report 2020-21**. Available at: <http://publications.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/dataset/81ced0f4-3912-4658-bc6e-23d2d64f940e/resource/b195fb55-bb2a-4c50-a73c-64d43d0157ab/download/aberdeenshire-year-3-joint-child-poverty-local-action-report-april-2020---march-2021.pdf> (Accessed 16 August 2022).

²⁹ Clackmannanshire Alliance (2021) **Clackmannanshire Local Child Poverty Action Report 2019/2020 & 2020/21**. Available at: [Clackmannanshire Local Child Poverty Action Report 2019/20 and 2020/21 \(clacks.gov.uk\)](https://www.clacks.gov.uk/media/14401/5362-Child-local-poverty-action-report2021-FINAL.pdf) (Accessed 16 August 2022) and Inverclyde Council (2021) **Inverclyde Local Child Poverty Action Report: Year Three 2020-21**. Available at: <https://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/assets/attach/14401/5362-Child-local-poverty-action-report2021-FINAL.pdf> (Accessed 16 August 2022).

³⁰ The City of Edinburgh Council (2021) **End Poverty in Edinburgh Annual Report**. Available at: [Item 7.9 - End Poverty in Edinburgh Annual Report.pdf](https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/media/14401/5362-Child-local-poverty-action-report2021-FINAL.pdf) (Accessed 16 August 2022).

³¹ West Dunbartonshire Council (2021) **West Dunbartonshire: Local Child Poverty Action Report 2020-2021**. Available at: <https://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/media/4320893/west-dunbartonshire-local-child-poverty-action-report-2020-2021-nov-30.pdf> (Accessed 18 August 2022).

pandemic.³² These do not target any specific minority ethnic group but rather seek to listen to issues that different minority ethnic groups might have. North Lanarkshire Council references targeted employability support towards the ‘BAME community’ and other priority groups.³³

As discussed earlier, without more detailed and disaggregated data on BME poverty, Local Authorities will focus on chosen communities with the minority ethnic category without clarity on if these are the families most in need of the support and if other minority ethnic families are also in need of anti-poverty actions.

Lived Experience

Consulting with those who have lived experience of poverty was a priority for many local authorities. Consulting with priority family groups was common, however, there was often no reference as to the outcome of these meetings.

Angus Council held Angus Listening Events where 68 local people participated in sessions to increase local engagement including those with protected characteristics, such as Syrian refugee families.³⁴ For three months in 2020 in Renfrewshire, the Poverty Alliance carried out interviews with 11 organisations, one of which, Pachedu, works with minority ethnic groups “to promote diversity, tolerance and dignity for humanity”.³⁵ Angus and Renfrewshire are the only two instances where minority ethnic groups are specifically referenced as having been consulted about the particular barriers they face and how best to address them.

Consultation of minority ethnic groups with lived experience of poverty can be an important tool for ensuring that the needs of these groups are understood and accounted for and that the outcomes created by Local Authorities properly reflect these needs. They could also work to foster good relations between

³² Renfrewshire Council and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (2021) **Local Child Poverty Action Report: Renfrewshire 2020/2021**. Available at: https://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/media/13702/Local-Child-Poverty-Action-Report-20-21/pdf/LCPAR_20-21_Final_joint.pdf?m=1629204145337 (Accessed 16 August 2022).

³³ North Lanarkshire Council and NHS Lanarkshire (2021) **Local Child Poverty Action Report 2021**. Available at: [LOCAL CHILD POVERTY ACTION REPORT 2021 \(northlanarkshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/media/13702/LOCAL-CHILD-POVERTY-ACTION-REPORT-2021.pdf) (Accessed 16 August 2022).

³⁴ Angus Community Planning Partnership (2021) **Angus Joint Child Poverty Local Action Plan 20/21**. Available at: <https://www.angus.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-09/Angus%20Joint%20Child%20Poverty%20Local%20Action%20Plan%202021.pdf> (Accessed 16 August 2022).

³⁵ Renfrewshire Council and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (2021) **Local Child Poverty Action Report: Renfrewshire 2020/2021**. Available at: https://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/media/13702/Local-Child-Poverty-Action-Report-20-21/pdf/LCPAR_20-21_Final_joint.pdf?m=1629204145337 (Accessed 16 August 2022).

BME families, local organisations and the council, ensuring the availability of pathways for communication.

Employment

When considering the issue of employment, some Local Authorities sought measures to increase engagement with employment support services and provide support to the priority groups, young people and parents. Dundee City³⁶, West Lothian³⁷ and other Local Authorities address this issue but do not target this support at BME people, rather BME groups are implicitly included in a wider initiative.

Edinburgh offers holistic employment support to people from target groups and references the Datakirk programme which supports parents from minority ethnic groups to achieve careers in data.³⁸ Edinburgh is also developing a new blended employability service offering holistic support to minority ethnic families to improve their employment and housing circumstances.³⁹ This is the only Local Authority to mention a specific employment service for BME groups. In 2021 the ethnicity employment rate gap was 11.7 percentage points.⁴⁰ Considering this, it is reasonable to expect more work in this area to increase BME employment and shrink this gap.

‘In work poverty’ is addressed in multiple action plans, for example, East Renfrewshire Council describes increased support for parents in the workplace to train and gain progression,⁴¹ and Falkirk Council describes a range of support to increase income including skills development, financial advice, and

³⁶ Dundee City Council (2021) **Dundee Fairness Action Plan/ Child Poverty Annual Report 2020/2021**. Available at: [196-2021.pdf \(dundeecity.gov.uk\)](#) (Accessed 16 August 2022).

³⁷ West Lothian Council and NHS Lothian (2021) **West Lothian Local Child Poverty Action Report 2020-2021**. Available at: [West Lothian Local Child Poverty Action Report 2020 21 FINAL.pdf \(westlothian.gov.uk\)](#) (Accessed 16 August 2022).

³⁸ The City of Edinburgh Council (2021) **End Poverty in Edinburgh Annual Report**. Available at: [Item 7.9 - End Poverty in Edinburgh Annual Report.pdf](#) (Accessed 16 August 2022).

³⁹ The City of Edinburgh Council (2021) **End Poverty in Edinburgh Annual Report**. [Family Equality Project \(joinedupforfamilies.org\)](#)

⁴⁰ Annual Population Survey 2021 (2022) **Scotland’s Labour Market: People, Places and Regions – Protected Characteristics. Statistics from the Annual Population Survey 2021**. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-labour-market-people-places-regions-protected-characteristics-statistics-annual-population-survey-2021/> (Accessed 30th September 2022).

⁴¹ East Renfrewshire Council, NHS Great Glasgow and Clyde and East Renfrewshire Communities Together (2021) **Local Child Poverty Action Plan: 2020-2021 Progress Report (Year 3)**. Available at: [East-Ren-LCPAR-20-21.pdf \(improvementservice.org.uk\)](#) (Accessed 16 August 2022).

employment progression opportunities.⁴² In Falkirk's LCPAR, three BME parents, out of a total of 21 parents, are mentioned as having engaged with pre-work support. However, it is unclear if this was as a result of targeted action or not.

None of these strategies to reduce in-work poverty are described as targeted at BME families, despite Scottish Government findings that those experiencing in-work poverty in Scotland are more likely to be BME groups, women, and those living in the private rental sector, compared to both the general population and all those in poverty.⁴³ Despite clear evidence that there should be a specific focus on minority ethnic families, policy actions instead include them as a general priority group, reducing the likelihood of success.

While many actions in each Local Authority target all of the priority groups, most lack action focused on any one group and therefore do not address the individual barriers each group faces. Generalised strategies aimed at reducing poverty demonstrate a lack of understanding of the structural inequalities, such as racism, that shape the experiences and outcomes of families with protected characteristics. Tackling inequalities will require nuanced and focused anti-poverty responses.

Financial Support

The action reports often cite funding given to priority families including minority ethnic families, but there is a lack of follow-up within the action plans as to how this funding helped the families or what specifically it was allocated for. West Dunbartonshire cites funding given by the Council to 34 minority ethnic families for "welfare rights services delivery".⁴⁴ There is no further information provided about the results of this funding or the way in which it helped the 34 families. Glasgow references the One Parent Families Scotland programme and the funding provided by the Council to this service to support

⁴² Falkirk Council, NHS Forth Valley and Falkirk Community Planning Partnership (2021) **Falkirk's Local Child Poverty Action Report 2021**. Available at: [Falkirk's Local Child Poverty Action Report 2021](#) (Accessed 16 August 2022).

⁴³ Scottish Government Communities Analysis Division (2019) **What do we know about in-work poverty in Scotland? Interim findings**. Available at: [What+do+we+know+about+in-work+poverty+in+Scotland+2019+interim+findings.pdf \(www.gov.scot\)](#) (Accessed 16 August 2022).

⁴⁴ West Dunbartonshire Council (2021) **West Dunbartonshire: Local Child Poverty Action Report 2020-2021**. Available at: <https://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/media/4320893/west-dunbartonshire-local-child-poverty-action-report-2020-2021-nov-30.pdf> (Accessed 18 August 2022).

priority groups.⁴⁵ There are no further details about the use of the funds or the ways in which the priority families benefitted from it.

Some forms of financial grants are included in many of the Action Plans. North Lanarkshire provides financial support to vulnerable people through referrals sent to the Financial Inclusion team, with 61 referrals from minority ethnic groups out of a total of 1038 referrals.⁴⁶ Aberdeenshire gave funding to Gypsy/Traveller and other communities disproportionately affected by the pandemic with 213 people benefiting from the initiative, however, there was no ethnicity breakdown.⁴⁷ A lack of clarity about the uses and results of the funding hinders adequate evaluation of the impact it had on the families and how this can be replicated/improved in the future.

An Intersectional Approach

It is important, when creating anti-poverty strategies, to take an intersectional approach that considers how some families will fall into the category of more than one of the priority groups.⁴⁸ Although there was little discussion of intersectional approaches being taken, there were a few examples of actions in which minority ethnic families were considered alongside other priority family groups. Glasgow Council is providing funding to One Parent Families Scotland to continue to support specific priority groups, one of which is lone parents from BME communities.⁴⁹ Glasgow and Orkney Islands are the only reports to mention BME communities alongside other priority groups such as lone parents or mothers under 25.

The Poverty and Inequality Commission has undertaken research into intersectionality in poverty and inequality in Scotland, reviewing existing

⁴⁵ Glasgow City Council, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and Glasgow City HSCP (2021) **Glasgow's Year 3 Summar Local Child Poverty Action Report 2020/21**. Available at: [CHttpHandler.ashx \(glasgow.gov.uk\)](CHttpHandler.ashx (glasgow.gov.uk)) (Accessed 16 August 2022).

⁴⁶ North Lanarkshire Council and NHS Lanarkshire (2021) **Local Child Poverty Action Report 2021**. Available at: [LOCAL CHILD POVERTY ACTION REPORT 2021 \(northlanarkshire.gov.uk\)](LOCAL CHILD POVERTY ACTION REPORT 2021 (northlanarkshire.gov.uk)) (Accessed 16 August 2022).

⁴⁷ Aberdeenshire Council (2021) **Child Poverty Local Action Report 2020-2021**. Available at: <http://publications.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/dataset/81ced0f4-3912-4658-bc6e-23d2d64f940e/resource/b195fb55-bb2a-4c50-a73c-64d43d0157ab/download/aberdeenshire-year-3-joint-child-poverty-local-action-report-april-2020---march-2021.pdf> (Accessed 16 August 2022).

⁴⁸ Intersectionality theory explains how the full range of characteristics someone possesses impacts their experience of inequality. Much of the early prominent academic work on this is by Kimberlé Crenshaw, focussing on how anti-discrimination law and theory often fails to protect Black women whose experience of inequality and discrimination is distinct from the experiences of both white women and Black men. Available at: <nhsggc equalities changing the race paradigm.pdf> (Accessed 18 September 2022).

⁴⁹ Glasgow City Council (2021) **Glasgow's Year 3 Summary Local Child Poverty Action Report 2020/21**. Available at: [CHttpHandler.ashx \(glasgow.gov.uk\)](CHttpHandler.ashx (glasgow.gov.uk)) (Accessed 16 August 2022).

research, policy and practise around intersecting inequalities.⁵⁰ The report stresses the importance of understanding multiple, often overlapping barriers facing parents in Scotland to provide sustainable routes out of poverty. An intersectional approach to issues of poverty and inequality would dramatically improve outcomes and policymaking competence and ensure that no groups fall through the gaps when addressing child poverty.

Equality Impact Assessments

As listed public bodies, every Local Authority is required to include an assessment of the impact of all new or revised policies, practices or services to meet the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duties (PSED), and also to accessibly publish the results of Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs).

Out of the 26 Action Plans, only seven contained an Equality Impact Assessment. Given the importance of local reports, it could reasonably be expected that impact assessments would have been completed.

For those reports which did have EQIAs, many of these did not mention race, let alone have any focus on minority ethnic families. The EQIAs often included little detail on the actual impact for families with protected characteristics, with many merely referencing vague monitors of impact that would be used to determine success. Renfrewshire Council is the only Local Authority to acknowledge this problem, even while they do not include an EQIA in their Action Plan. Their Community Impact Assessment states that more could be done to recognise the unique challenges of BME communities when plans and policies are being made.⁵¹

Glasgow's EQIA breaks down into sections based on each protected characteristics group, one of which is race.⁵² They acknowledge the significant barriers that BME communities face when accessing social security and employment. The EQIA outlines the strategies that have been taken to support BME people out of poverty, most of which did not focus exclusively on

⁵⁰ The Poverty and Inequality Commission (2021) **Intersectionality: Revealing the Realities of Poverty and Inequality in Scotland**. Available at: <https://povertyinequality.scot/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Intersectionality-Revealing-the-Reality-of-Poverty-and-Inequality-in-Scotland-May-2021.pdf> (Accessed 18 August 2022).

⁵¹ Renfrewshire Council and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (2021) **Local Child Poverty Action Report: Renfrewshire 2020/2021**. Available at: https://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/media/13702/Local-Child-Poverty-Action-Report-20-21/pdf/LCPAR_20-21_Final_joint.pdf?m=1629204145337 (Accessed 16 August 2022).

⁵² Glasgow City Council (2021) **Child Poverty EQIA 2020/2021**. Available at: <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=54203&p=0> (Accessed 18 August 2022).

overrepresented within the private rented sector where housing costs are higher.⁵⁶

Glasgow's action report describes a pilot scheme that provides financial advice to parents, families and young people in a school setting. A Financial Inclusion Support Officer (FISO) provides one to one support in the fields of welfare rights and debt reconciliation. The scheme was set up with schools in different areas of Glasgow, one of which, Southside Central, was chosen due to the higher number of BME residents in that area.⁵⁷ As of October 2021, 68% of the families who received the help of the FISO were from a BME background and the FISO helped families from four schools manage £41,140.47 in debt during the pilot phase of the programme.⁵⁸ This is an example of good practice in targeting anti-poverty action towards BME families and the inclusion of data on its impact also demonstrates commitment to assessing its success.

As Glasgow Council made steps to start solving local child poverty, it became clear that there was not an accurate picture of child poverty in the city and so it could not begin to effectively lower poverty levels. The Civic Centre for Innovation (CCI), working in partnership with Glasgow City Councils Financial Inclusion team, was commissioned to complete research into poverty in Glasgow. The aim was to discover how many children were living in households experiencing relative poverty.

This work resulted in the creation of the 'Child Poverty in Glasgow' Report in 2020,⁵⁹ described as 'Scotland's most accurate picture of Child Poverty in Glasgow'.⁶⁰ However, this report has no mention of or data on race, ethnicity or minority ethnic families. This is despite providing information on all other priority groups: lone parents, mothers under the age of 25, households where a member has a disability, households with three or more children, households

⁵⁶ CRER (2020) **Ethnicity and Poverty in Scotland in 2020**. Available at: [CRER Publications — CRER](#) (Accessed 19 August 2022).

⁵⁷ Glasgow City Council, Glasgow City HSCP and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (2020) **Glasgow's Local Child Poverty Action Report 2019/2020**. Available at: https://www.improvementservice.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0021/24708/Glasgow-LCPAR_2019-2020.pdf (Accessed 19 August 2022).

⁵⁸ Glasgow City Council (2021) **Financial Inclusion Support Officer Update Oct 2021**. Available at: <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=54918&p=0> (Accessed 18 August 2022).

⁵⁹ Centre for Civic Innovation and Glasgow City Council (2020) **Child Poverty in Glasgow Report 2020**. Available at: <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=51136&p=0> (Accessed 16 September 2022).

⁶⁰ Centre for Civic Innovation and Glasgow City Council (2020) **Understanding Child Poverty across Glasgow....** Available at: <https://cciglasgow.org/projects/child-poverty-2020/> (Accessed 16 September 2022).

where there is a child under the age of one and households where there is a child under the age of five. In addition, kinship care households were included.

The omission of minority ethnic families from this research obscures the extent of the potential link between ethnicity and poverty in the city. For example, one of the focus areas in the report is Southside Central. Here there is above average level of child poverty at 44% of children, one of the highest rates of child poverty in Glasgow and therefore Scotland. The context of this is discussed without mention of ethnicity; the 2011 census shows that 25% of Southside Central is comprised of BME groups, with 14% being Pakistani.⁶¹ Therefore, minority ethnic families make up a significant part of this ward and without considering this, the issue of child poverty in the area cannot really begin to be addressed.

The lack of data on ethnicity and poverty also means that the Council is unable to collect data on actual BME family circumstances and must instead rely on estimates for issues that are specific to BME families. It is therefore more difficult to develop accurate and targeted solutions.

As Glasgow's action report states 'The CCI data reports and subsequent analysis of data held on families will be key in determining actions taken by the various child poverty governance structures across the city'. The impact of the omission of BME families from this will therefore have far reaching, severe impacts and may contribute to worsening poverty rates for BME people locally.

Already we can begin to see some of the consequences of the omission of minority ethnic families from the research. In 2021, a subsequent report by the CCI on the impacts of COVID-19 was published.⁶² As in the last report, all other priority groups were included, with the addition of another group- households with children under six. Again, minority ethnic families, despite their status as a priority group, were not included. This shows the cumulative adverse impact of minority ethnic families not being included in the initial research, with no analysis on the impact of the pandemic on BME children in Glasgow, despite there being known unequal social and economic impacts of COVID-19 for BME groups.

⁶¹ Glasgow City Council (2017) **City Ward Factsheets 2017: Ward 8 Southside Central**. Available at: [WARD8a \(glasgow.gov.uk\)](https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/ward8a) (Accessed 20 September 2022).

⁶² Centre for Civic Innovation and Glasgow City Council (2021) **Child Poverty: Understanding the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic**. Available at: <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=55359&p=0> (Accessed 16 September 2022).

Without local data on ethnicity and poverty the Council cannot work as effectively to reduce child poverty levels for BME families. The Glasgow local action plan states that it is unfortunate that the systems used to collect the data analysed by CCI do not record information on ethnicity, however, that they would 'continue to work with the BAME communities to identify their issues and develop solutions to them'.⁶³

Given that it is now several years since this work with CCI was instigated, similar or alternate research should already have been done, or at the very least been proposed, to close this evidence gap for minority ethnic families. Indeed, any future research planned must include minority ethnic families as a priority.

Glasgow's Local Child Poverty Action Plan mentioned some positive work that is being undertaken to reduce BME child poverty. Yet considering the high population of BME communities and the effects that COVID-19 and the cost of living crisis will have had on these groups, more must be done if Glasgow is to reach the 2030 targets and prevent an increase in BME poverty in city.

⁶³ Glasgow City Council, Glasgow City HSCP and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (2020) **Glasgow's Local Child Poverty Action Report 2019/2020**. Available at: https://www.improvementservice.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0021/24708/Glasgow-LCPAR_2019-2020.pdf (Accessed 19 August 2022).

Conclusions

As previously mentioned, BME children are disproportionately at risk of poverty, with 38% being in relative poverty in 2021. This research piece sought to investigate whether Local Authorities had sufficient actions in place or planned to target BME families in their Local Child Poverty Action Reports. The piece has also considered the issue of data availability, how this has hindered anti-poverty action and what should be done going forward.

The 2020/21 Local Child Poverty Action Reports lack focus on the issues that minority ethnic communities in Scotland face. While the 2017 Act does not legally require measures to be taken to support BME communities, Scottish Government data and CRER research demonstrates that minority ethnic families are particularly hard-hit by poverty and are some of the worse affected groups. Despite this disproportionality, throughout the reports BME families are routinely sidelined, even when there is acknowledgment that BME children face higher levels of poverty than white Scottish/British children. CRER believes that the child poverty targets cannot be considered as being met if BME families are left behind.

Many of the reports lack clarity on the impact of policies or how they will help minority ethnic families as a priority group. Simply adding a mention of race and suggesting that general anti-poverty measures will also apply to BME groups is not enough to constitute a policy on providing support to minority ethnic families and children. Areas with larger BME populations could reasonably be expected to do more to address BME child poverty and how they will tackle it, yet this is often not reflected in the reports.

Alongside this, a persistent lack of data hinders a proper understanding of the correlation between child poverty and ethnicity and prevents thorough and far-reaching anti-poverty strategies from being properly formulated. Looking forward, there must be a focus on improving the ways that data on ethnicity and poverty is recorded.

Future LCPARs should thoroughly consider the role of ethnicity in child poverty and formulate ambitious strategies that focus on minority ethnic families to ensure they are not left behind.

Going Forward:

- Data on ethnicity and poverty must be collected and published on a national and local level, with detailed ethnicity breakdowns to properly monitor poverty levels
- Local Authorities must include EQIAs in their LCPARs to show clear evidence of addressing poverty for all protected characteristics. Measuring impact ensures actions are having positive outcomes
- Local anti-poverty strategies must have a strong focus on minority ethnic families, rather than including them among the targets of generalised strategies. This is particularly the case for Local Authorities with higher levels of BME population
- New research and data collection should be conducted focusing on poverty and families that have multiple intersecting protected characteristics/ belong to more than one of the six priority groups

Appendix 1: Percentage of child poverty in each Parliamentary Constituency 2020/2021

Parliamentary Constituency	% Child Poverty 2020/21
Glasgow Central	40.7%
Glasgow North East	30.1%
Glasgow South West	30.0%
Glasgow East	28.2%
Glasgow South West	27.4%
Glasgow North	27.0%
Glenrothes	26.0%
Airdrie and Shotts	25.7%
Glasgow North West	25.7%
North Ayrshire and Arran	25.2%
Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath	25.0%
Motherwell and Wishaw	24.6%
Kilmarnock and Loudon	24.5%
Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock	24.4%
West Dumbartonshire	24.2%
Central Ayrshire	23.9%
Dumfries and Galloway	23.8%
Ciathness, Sutherland and Easter Ross	23.7%
Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill	23.6%
Dundee West	23.2%
Aberdeen North	23.0%
Angus	22.8%
Livingston	22.1%
Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk	21.5%
Moray	21.4%
Falkirk	21.3%
Rutherglen and Hamilton West	21.3%
Paisley and Renfrewshire South	21.2%
Edinburgh East	21.1%
Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East	21.0%
Perth and North Perthshire	20.6%
Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale	20.4%
Dunfermline and West Fife	20.4%
Ross, Skye and Lochaber	20.2%
Dundee East	20.1%
Lanark and Hamilton East	20.1%
Ochil and South Perthshire	20.1%
Linlithgow and East Falkirk	19.5%
Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey	18.9%
Mildlothian	18.6%
Argyll and Bute	18.6%
Paisley and Renfrewshire North	18.5%
Inverclyde	18.2%
Orkney and Shetland	18.1%
Banff and Buchan	18.0%
Stirling	17.9%

East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow	17.8%
Edinburgh North and Leith	17.8%
East Lothian	17.7%
Edinburgh South West	17.2%
North East Fife	17.0%
Na h-Eileanan an Lar	16.0%
Edinburgh South	14.2%
Aberdeen South	13.7%
Gordon	13.3%
East Renfrewshire	13.2%
Edinburgh West	12.8%
West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine	11.0%
East Dunbartonshire	10.2%

Source: End Child Poverty Coalition (2021) [Child Poverty Statistics - End Child Poverty](#)

Appendix 2: Percentage of BME pupils in each Local Authority 2021

Local Authorities	% BME pupils in Local Authority 2021
Aberdeen City	18.2
Aberdeenshire	4.2
Angus	3.3
Argyll and Bute	3.7
City of Edinburgh	20.3
Clackmannanshire	4.4
Dumfries and Galloway	2.9
Dundee City	11.8
East Ayrshire	3.2
East Dunbartonshire	11.4
East Lothian	3.9
East Renfrewshire	22.4
Falkirk	5
Fife	5.2
Glasgow City	25.5
Highland	4.0
Inverclyde	3.1
Midlothian	6.2
Moray	3.5
Na h-Eilleanan Siar	2.3
North Ayrshire	2.9
North Lanarkshire	5.4
Orkeny Islands	2.5
Perth and Kinross	4.7
Renfrewshire	7
Scottish Borders	3
Shetland Islands	3.2
South Ayrshire	3.3
South Lanarkshire	6
Stirling	5.4
West Dunbartonshire	4
West Lothian	7.6

Source: Scottish Government (2021) **Pupil Census**. Available at:
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/pupil-census-supplementary-statistics/>

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