

# **A Child Poverty Bill for Scotland**

## **Consultation Response**

September 2016

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# INTRODUCTION

Shelter Scotland helps over half a million people every year struggling with bad housing or homelessness through our advice, support and legal services. And we campaign to make sure that, one day, no one will have to turn to us for help. As part of this work, we established Foundations First, a family support project in Renfrewshire that aims to find creative ways to engage and work with children and their families to break away from a life of homelessness and poverty. Another project, Safe and Sound, helps young people to avoid or successfully manage family relationship breakdowns in Dundee, Fife, Angus, and Perth and Kinross.

Shelter Scotland welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Scottish Government's Consultation Paper on a Child Poverty Bill for Scotland. We support the inclusion of clear targets to significantly reduce child poverty by 2030 in statute, especially after the UK Government announced in 2015 that it plans to scrap the UK-wide income targets. While achieving these targets would be a promising and considerable step towards eradicating child poverty in Scotland, the targets also demonstrate the shameful truth that, in 2015/14, 160,000 children in Scotland lived in relative poverty before housing costs.<sup>1</sup> An additional 60,000 children were living in poverty after housing costs – entailing that more than one in five children in Scotland lived in relative poverty in 2014/15.<sup>2</sup> Further still, absolute child poverty in the UK is estimated to increase from around 15.1 per cent to 18.3 per cent over the next 5 years.<sup>3</sup>

Shelter Scotland is particularly pleased that the targets have an after housing costs basis, as we feel that this more accurately represents the fact that housing costs are almost always a given. However, we are concerned by the lack of clarity and guidance surrounding what housing costs would include and that this is likely not to adequately represent the true housing costs of many households with children.

We were glad to see that the delivery of affordable homes and social rent targets was explicitly mentioned in the Consultation Paper as measures to tackle child poverty. Over the next five years just over 12,000 new affordable homes are required every year. This means that over 10,000 more homes are needed than the target of 50,000 new homes that the Scottish Government has committed to in its Programme for Government.<sup>4</sup>

The Consultation Paper further mentioned the importance of communities. The over 5,200 children in temporary accommodation in March 2016<sup>5</sup> in Scotland do not experience the stable environment that they need in order to achieve their full potential.<sup>6</sup> Many more children in Scotland live in sub-standard, overcrowded housing. As numerous research has illustrated, children growing up in bad housing are more likely to become sick, not finish school and live in poverty as adults.<sup>7</sup> Shelter Scotland believes that housing conditions are just one of the many factors that are linked to child poverty, which income-based targets do not adequately represent. While the proposed measurement framework accounts for some of these factors, we believe that more indicators should be included, especially in relation to housing and homelessness.

The housing issues we face in Scotland today are at the centre of a vicious cycle that needs to be address if child poverty is to be significantly reduced by 2030.

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<sup>1</sup> Scottish Government (2016), [Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland: 2014-15](#).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Browne, J., Hood, A. (2016), [IFS Report R114: Living Standards, Poverty and Inequality in the UK: 2015-16 to 2020-21](#), Institute for Fiscal Studies.

<sup>4</sup> Scottish Government (2016), [A Plan for Scotland: The Government's Programme for Scotland 2016-17](#).

<sup>5</sup> Scottish Government (2016), [Homelessness in Scotland: 2015-16](#).

<sup>6</sup> Hogg, S., et al (2015), [An Unstable Start](#), NSCPP.

<sup>7</sup> Shelter (2006), [Chance of a Lifetime: the impact of bad housing on children's lives](#).

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## **Consultation Questions**

Shelter Scotland's response to the questions posed by the Scottish Government focuses on our interest in examining and addressing the links between housing, homelessness and child poverty. We therefore especially concentrate on Questions 3 to 7 and 10.

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## QUESTION 1

### Do you agree with the Scottish Government including in statute an ambition to eradicate child poverty?

Shelter Scotland agrees with the Scottish Government including in statute an ambition to eradicate child poverty. We believe that this sends out a strong message both to the families, who are struggling with the daily grind of poverty, and to local and national policymakers and politicians that more needs to be done to tackle the causes of poverty, rather than stigmatise people, who experience poverty.

As we further discuss below, this ambition needs to include an approach that recognises the complexity of child poverty and the many factors, which influence child poverty, and includes clear policies, which will reduce child poverty. An equally worthy ambition is to ensure that when people do fall into poverty, there are processes in place to lift them out again within a certain time frame. One of the targets proposed by the Scottish Government – reducing the percentage of children living in persistent poverty to 5 per cent – recognises the importance of this ambition. Yet, targets are likely to be missed if processes and local implementation do not adequately address the factors linked to child poverty.

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## QUESTION 2

### What are your views on making income targets statutory?

Shelter Scotland believes that having statutory income targets is essential to effectively monitor and evaluate policies that have a direct impact on household income and poverty. While these measures should be enshrined in statute, Shelter Scotland believes that further indicators should be considered with the aim of reflecting the rounded reality that child poverty is a complex issue linked to many different factors. More detail is provided below in our response to Questions 7 and 10.

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## QUESTION 3

### How do you think the role of the Ministerial Advisory Group on Child Poverty can be developed to ensure that they play a key role in developing the legislation?

The Ministerial Advisory Group has learned a lot from national statutory and third sector bodies. Shelter Scotland, however, feels that there is still a gap in terms of including people with lived experience. It is important to hear directly from people, who have lived experience of growing up in poverty or bringing up a family on a low income. We are of the opinion that recruiting a team of local advisors, who could share the experiences of their communities, would give the Advisory Group a clearer understanding of some of the day-to-day difficulties and barriers that families and children face. It is also likely to help them identify local solutions that will help children living in poverty in some of the most deprived communities.

Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child gives children the right to express their views and for them to be taken seriously. Involving children in such processes entails giving them a platform to speak and be heard, directly or through a representative body, and ensuring that their views are not merely disregarded, while taking their age and maturity into consideration. The general need to include people with lived experience in the development of policy and legislation is also recognised by Scotland's National Action Plan for Human Rights.<sup>8</sup> Although organisations working on child poverty are represented in the Advisory Group, Shelter Scotland believes that more can be done to actively and directly involve children, especially on a local level.

Shelter Scotland feels that the Ministerial Advisory Group on Child Poverty needs to further recognise the important impact that housing and homelessness issues have on child poverty. This could be addressed by, for instance, including children with lived experience of homelessness and housing issues and ensuring that organisations with a focus on housing issues are adequately represented.

The Safe and Sound project, which we have developed in partnership with Relationships Scotland, aims to help young people to avoid and manage the breakdown of family relationships.<sup>9</sup> A large part of our role in Safe and Sound is to advocate for young people in formal meetings. We dedicate a large amount of time in order to properly understanding their views and to help them convey these views in formal settings. For many of the young people we work with this is often daunting and intimidating – especially when parents or carers take part in the meetings.

In addition, Shelter Scotland suggests that developing an assessment that rates all relevant legislation – not just the Child Poverty Bill - against its expected impact on child poverty levels could ensure that the interconnectedness of poverty to other issues is better addressed. This would help to embed the need for a more crosscutting approach, which recognises the many factors that impact on child poverty, and to place tackling child poverty at the forefront of all local and national policymakers.

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<sup>8</sup> Scottish Human Rights Commission (2013), [Scotland's National Action Plan for Human Rights 2013 – 2017](#).

<sup>9</sup> Please find more information about the Safe and Sound Project on [our website](#).

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## QUESTION 4

How can links between the national strategy and local implementation be improved? What could local partners do to contribute to meeting these national goals? This might include reporting and sharing best practice or developing new strategic approaches.

From Shelter Scotland's experience, there is a need to establish a more effective working relationship between the local authority housing departments and children's services. Considering the importance of having adequate housing for families and children, children's services should include greater access to housing advice. Housing and Social Care Services should be aligned with regards to integration outcomes and ensure that there are forums and practices that allow for Housing to remain front and center for those at risk of further vulnerability if they became homeless. The alleviation of poverty can be impacted when housing and the importance of 'place' is not part of the wider planning and support mechanism around children and families.

Moreover, sharing best practice should be encouraged across the field. Local authorities and social landlords, as well as private landlords and letting agencies, should, for example, share best practice in order to minimise the number of evictions involving households with children.

We suggest that each local authority area establishes a Poverty Taskforce to identify issues and develop solutions in their communities, similar to the Poverty Commission established in Renfrewshire. To ensure buy-in from the community, it is probably best if the lead organisation is either one that already has a good level of trust within that community or a national body such as Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) or the Poverty Alliance, which have a clear understanding of the issues facing families in poverty. The local taskforces should involve a wide range of individuals and community groups, including groups working with people in crisis or in financial difficulties and those that engage with people in the community such as leisure groups, creative arts projects, youth groups, pensioner's lunch clubs and schools. This would better reflect the reality that all sectors of a community can help to combat child poverty, improve the life chances of children from poor households and address the stigma associated with being poor. In our opinion this could be similar to the social inclusion partnership model.

The local taskforces should use a range of participatory methods to engage with local community groups and should meet regularly with the Ministerial Advisory Group, which will help them get a fuller picture of what works within communities and where difficulties lie. This would recognise the fact that poverty has long-term impacts on neighbourhoods, as well as on individuals and families. Moreover, participatory methods and involving local communities would provide an excellent opportunity to increase and improve the above-mentioned participation of people with lived experience, including children.

Shelter Scotland operates a family support project in Renfrewshire called Foundations First.<sup>10</sup> We try to find creative ways to work and engage with people who require support – most of whom have financial as well as housing difficulties – and with the wider community. Many of the people we work with are living in poverty but might not currently live in housing crisis. This has helped us develop a greater understanding of some of the issues they face. We, for example, ran a participatory photography project to learn about the experiences of private renting in Renfrewshire. The project provided a mechanism for

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<sup>10</sup> For more information, please visit the [Shelter Scotland's website on Foundations First](#).



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the group to tell their stories using their images rather than printed words. At the end of the 8 week course, our participants had highlighted some of their housing concerns and ambitions through the use of photography. As the participants grew in confidence and began to feel comfortable in each other's company, they shared some very interesting and illuminating stories about their personal housing experiences and the impact their housing and neighbourhood had on them and their children in terms of health, well-being, community involvement and their children's education.

This is just one example of how working creatively with people, who have lived experience of a specific issue, can help the participants to understand their grievances in a wider context, while providing valuable insight for the organisation conducting the project. These participatory methods are often more meaningful and therefore more likely to elicit responses and feedback from hard-pressed families, who are unlikely to have time to wade through lengthy policy documents and consultations or may struggle to attend meetings because of childcare and travel costs. We have also found that participants might feel uncomfortable amongst 'suited and booted' professionals and are more likely to engage with more informal, creative projects.

Shelter Scotland further believes that each local area should include clear measurable targets on child poverty within their community plan and should have a budget to put local solutions to tackle child poverty into place. Sharing best practice among local areas should also be encouraged. In 2012, Save the Children found that merely 16 per cent of local authorities in Scotland had developed a local action plan to tackle child poverty and only 5 per cent had undertaken a child poverty impact assessment or established a development group on child poverty.<sup>11</sup>

We share the concern of the Scottish Government regarding multiple reporting, especially in regard to limited resources. While outcomes need to be reported upon, there exists a strong need for finding better ways of using existing data collection to reduce the multiple reporting that many individuals and organisations currently face, which simply add to their stress and workload. There should also be a greater focus on improving multi-agency work to reduce the time and stress on families that have contact with multiple support services.

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<sup>11</sup> McKendrick, J. H., Sinclair, S. (2012), [Local action to tackle child poverty in Scotland](#), Save the Children.

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## QUESTION 5

What are your views on the income-based measures of poverty proposed for Scottish child poverty targets? For example, are there any additional income-based measures you think we should also use (and if so, why)? Are there any alternative approaches to measuring income – for example, as used in other countries – that you think could apply in Scotland?

Shelter Scotland is of the view that income-based measures are, although very important, merely one of the possible indicators of poverty. At the same time, we realise that there is no fool proof method of measuring poverty, especially given its complexity. In this regard, we would like to stress that a fuller picture also considers the resources beyond income that are available to households that contain children. We recognise that the measurement framework referred to in the Consultation Paper includes some of the possible child poverty indicators that look beyond household income, which we have commented on below in our response to Question 10.

Material deprivation is an important measure of a household's ability to pay for basic goods and services. Shelter Scotland is pleased to see that the Scottish Government supports this view and has included a target based on a combination of low income and material deprivation. However, we are concerned that the questions related to this measure can appear insensitive and do not necessarily capture the realities for some of the poorest families. A study of the experiences of our Foundations First support workers, for example, noticed that most of their clients' families would buy Christmas and birthday presents for their children, but quite often got themselves into high cost debts to do this. The same goes for other material deprivation questions such as purchasing of white goods, which is often done on a lease system from high interest 'rent-to-own' companies and end up costing substantially more than if purchased outright or even on a credit card.

Another measure, which was developed by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in 2008, is the Minimum Income Standard (MIS).<sup>12</sup> The MIS provides a benchmark of minimum needs based on goods and services the public think are necessary for an adequate standard of living in the UK. This is updated annually and includes food, clothes, housing, and social and cultural participation. JRF uses 75 per cent of the MIS as a poverty indicator. A couple with two children would need £776.28 per week to meet the MIS and £422.41 when childcare and housing costs (including rent, council tax and water rates) are excluded.<sup>13</sup> This is slightly higher than the relative poverty threshold, which after housing costs stood at £393 for a family with two children living in Scotland in 2014/15.<sup>14</sup>

An additional measure, which would be useful to include, is one that looks at income inequality and measures how this changes over time, as tackling poverty will require a greater redistribution of wealth. The 20:20 ratio or the Gini coefficient, for example, would give a clearer picture of how well Scotland is moving towards reducing inequality. The 20:20 ratio looks at how much richer the top 20 per cent of the population are than the bottom 20 per cent, while the Gini coefficient measures the degree of household income inequality by rating it between 0 and 100 with 0 representing a society where every person has the same income.

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<sup>12</sup> Davis, *et al.*, (2016), [A Minimum Income Standard for the UK in 2016](#). Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Scottish Government (2016), [Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland: 2014-15](#).

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Measuring levels of destitution on a regular basis would also be extremely useful. This would help focus attention on those individuals and communities, who are struggling the most, and ensure support is in place for children growing up in families that are destitute. Both the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Citizens Advice Scotland have carried out research into levels of destitution but these have been one-off pieces of work and have not focused specifically on families.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Fitzpatrick, S., *et al.* (2016), [Destitution in the UK](#), Joseph Rowntree Foundation; Sims, R. (2016), [Living at the Sharp End](#), Citizens Advice Scotland.

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## QUESTION 6

### What are your views on the Scottish Government's proposals for the levels of child poverty that the targets will be set at?

We welcome the targets set by the Scottish Government, which will measure child poverty after housing costs and which set a persistent poverty target rate of 5 per cent. However, we think this target could be even more ambitious, as evidence shows that persistent poverty has the greatest impact on the long-term well-being and achievement of children in poor households. Eradicating persistent poverty is essential for the health and wealth of future generations. Even at 5 per cent this will leave over 45,000 children, whose life chances are inhibited by persistent poverty.

Moreover, the target suggests defining persistent poverty as a household living in relative poverty for at least three years out of a four-year period. We would welcome the Scottish Government changing their underlying definition of persistent poverty to a household living in relative poverty for at least two years out of a four-year period. Given the importance of a child's development and education, we strongly believe that a two-year period more adequately reflects the devastating and long-term effects that poverty has on children. This will also help focus attention on individuals and communities that are struggling with the effects of persistent poverty.

Shelter Scotland recognises that several economic levers to fully eradicate child poverty do not lie with the Scottish Government and that Scotland post-Brexit referendum faces several uncertainties that will have an impact on the Scottish economy and child poverty. However, we believe that reducing the original ambition in 1999, which was to eliminate child poverty by 2020, to limiting persistent poverty to 5 per cent of children living in Scotland in 2030 will result in continued hardship for many thousands of children across Scotland. In our opinion, it is essential that rigorous and regular monitoring of targets is put in place. When indicators are not being met, this needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

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## QUESTION 7

What are your views on the Scottish Government's proposal to set targets on an after housing costs basis? For example, are there any disadvantages to this approach that we have not already considered?

Shelter Scotland welcomes the proposal to set targets on an after housing costs basis. Compared to setting targets on a before housing costs basis, looking at after housing costs more adequately captures those households that pay disproportionately high costs for their housing due to type or location of their place of residence.

Looking at the proportion of children living in relative poverty before and after housing costs clearly demonstrates this importance. In 2014/15, 17 per cent of children in Scotland lived in relative poverty when one used a before housing costs basis.<sup>16</sup> However, that percentage rises to 22 per cent of all children in Scotland when we consider household income after mortgage and renting costs and other housing costs have been subtracted.<sup>17</sup> This constitutes a difference of around 60,000 children. Setting the targets on a before housing costs basis would therefore not represent these 60,000 children, who experience poverty first hand.

As housing accounts for a substantial proportion of household expenditure, particularly for poorer families, Shelter Scotland strongly thinks that it is essential that this is reflected in poverty measurements. Housing costs are generally a must, in the sense that the money left after covering housing costs can be seen as a better measure of the standard of living.

Moreover, using a before housing costs basis entails counting housing benefits as income. When housing benefits rise due to an increase in rent, this would be interpreted as a rise in income and standard of living, even though this does not reflect the reality that the recipient of the housing benefit has seen no rise in income after housing costs are deducted and the quality of accommodation has not necessarily improved either.

Income-based measurements of poverty, which do not deduct housing costs, do not adequately reflect the living standards of households, whose housing costs are high compared to the accommodation quality. As more and more households with children are living in the private rented sector, this will become increasingly important. Rent in the private sector is projected to rise by around 90 per cent between 2008 and 2040, while income is expected to rise by less than half of that over the same time period.<sup>18</sup> The proportion of households in the private rented sector has grown from 5 per cent in 1999 to 14 per cent in 2014.<sup>19</sup> Of the 330,000 households living in the private rented sector in Scotland in 2014, more than one in four contained children.<sup>20</sup> Between 2003 and 2013, the number of people, who experience poverty while living in the private rented sector, doubled in the UK.<sup>21</sup>

It is also crucial that the amount allocated for housing is a true reflection of housing costs and at present the Household Below Average Income (HBAI) data does not seem to

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<sup>16</sup> Scottish Government (2016), [Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland: 2014/15](#).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2016), [UK poverty: Causes, costs and solutions](#).

<sup>19</sup> Scottish Government (2015), [Scotland's People Annual Report: Results from the 2014 Scottish Household Survey](#).

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Maclnnes, T., *et al.* (2014), [Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion 2014](#), Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

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capture all relevant costs. The 'housing' costs only includes the 'interest' element of a mortgage and does not include the 'capital' element.<sup>22</sup> While this may have provided a more accurate picture of expenditure on housing during the 1990s and early 2000s, when interest-only mortgages were common practice and the investment was meant to be covered by an endowment, it is less accurate today where capital and interest mortgage policies are the norm for owner occupiers.

There seems to be a wide divergence concerning how housing costs are calculated and the costs allocated to housing do not seem to reflect the real costs. This is seen, for instance, when looking at the difference between before and after housing income targets. A couple with children aged 5 and 14, for example, was deemed to be living in relative poverty in 2014/15, if their household income was below the threshold of £435 per week.<sup>23</sup> On an after housing costs basis, the threshold was lowered to £393 per week,<sup>24</sup> entailing that the couple with two children would need £42 per week for housing – less than £200 per month. While both the before and after housing costs based thresholds look at income after taxes, including council tax,<sup>25</sup> the £42 includes housing benefits that a couple with two children might receive. The average weekly standard rent for local authority dwellings in Scotland is estimated to be £65.95, with the City of Edinburgh having the highest average at £92.49 and Moray the lowest at £52.01 – £10 above the £42 allocated for housing costs.<sup>26</sup> In addition, The Office of National Statistics states that the average Scottish household, which contains only 2.3 persons and not a couple with two children, needed £120.50 per week for housing expenditure (which includes mortgage capital repayments and council tax) in 2014.<sup>27</sup> It is evident that the £42 allocated weekly for housing costs for a couple with two children does not adequately represent the actual housing costs most people have to pay.

Of course, there is a need to ensure that the child poverty targets adequately represent the costs that households with children face. Depending on how the income thresholds are calculated, increasing the amount of income allocated to housing costs might lead to the lowering of the income target on an after housing costs basis. Using the example above, the housing costs allocated to a couple with two children need to be increased to above £42 per week. However, this will most probably lower the household income threshold based on after housing costs to less than £393 per week, which would entail that a family with £393 left per week after paying for housing would no longer be deemed as living in poverty, even though their living standard has not improved. This example further illustrates the limitation of income targets and the importance of considering other measures alongside the income targets, such as those discussed in Question 10.

Shelter Scotland further believes that several other downsides to the current definition of housing costs need to be considered. Badly insulated housing with a low Energy Efficiency Rating might be cheaper, however, low-income families, who might live in such properties to save housing costs, are likely to have to pay much higher energy costs. 845,000 households in Scotland live in fuel poverty, which accounts for almost 35 per cent of all Scottish households.<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, while the targets calculated using an after housing costs basis take the variations in household size into account through equivalisation, they do not account for other important household circumstances, such as caring responsibilities and housing costs associated with disabilities and illness.

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<sup>22</sup> UK Government (2015), [Infographic: how low income is measured](#).

<sup>23</sup> Scottish Government (2015), [Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland: 2014/15](#).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Scottish Government (2016), [Housing Statistics for Scotland 2016: Key information and Summary Tables](#).

<sup>27</sup> Office for National Statistics (2015), [Family Spending 2015: A report on the Living Costs and Food Survey 2014, Chapter 2: Housing expenditure](#).

<sup>28</sup> Shelter Scotland (2016), [Fuel poverty awareness could save NHS up to £80m](#).

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Location is another aspect that has a significant impact on housing costs. Low-income families can often not simply move to a place where the rent is cheaper, as this might entail leaving jobs, schools and crucial social networks, such as grandparents who are looking after children, behind.

Moreover, focusing on income targets on an after housing costs basis does not necessarily give us a good indication of the state of housing, especially if housing costs are underestimated. In order to flourish, children need decent housing that provides a safe and nurturing environment for them. Yet, many children in Scotland live in bad housing. Children, who live in homes that have damp or condensation, for instance, are more likely to develop asthma or other respiratory problems.<sup>29</sup> And children living in bad housing are more likely to live in poverty as adults.<sup>30</sup> It would therefore be useful to include poverty indicators, which capture the number of children living in overcrowded, sub-standard housing, as we suggest further below in relation to Question 10.

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<sup>29</sup> Shelter Scotland (2010), [The facts: bad housing and homelessness for children and young people in Scotland 2010](#).

<sup>30</sup> Shelter (2006), *op.cit.*

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## QUESTION 8

### What are your views on the Scottish Government's proposal to set targets that are expected to be achieved by 2030?

Shelter Scotland welcomes the Scottish Government's stance to continue to set a target for the eradication of child poverty rather than change the focus of attention, as has happened in recent years at UK Government level, where priority has switched to reducing unemployment. While we recognise that secure employment is an essential element to reducing child poverty it is crucial that the measures taken to encourage people into employment do not result in further detriment to the household.

Some of the measures taken by the UK Government to reduce unemployment are expected to have a negative impact on household income and therefore on child poverty. At Shelter Scotland, we expect that the cumulative effect of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 will see increases in child poverty rates. This entails that more will need to be done to ensure that the targets will be met by 2030.



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## QUESTION 9

**What are your views on the proposal that Scottish Ministers will be required by the Bill to produce a Child Poverty Delivery Plan every five years, and to report on this Plan annually?**

We believe that it is essential to have regular monitoring and evaluation of poverty targets and reporting annually on a five-year Child Poverty Delivery Plan should help identify progress being made towards tackling both income inequality and other sources of disadvantage. If each local authority is also required to produce their own Delivery Plan this would help identify examples both of best practice and opportunities for improvements.

Moreover, we support the idea of an annual report focusing on the progress being made towards meeting the targets and the Child Poverty Delivery Plan. We believe that such reports should also include the voices of people families, so that their daily experiences of living on low incomes, below the poverty line or in persistent poverty are heard and remembered.

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## QUESTION 10

Do you have any suggestions for how the measurement framework could usefully be improved? For example, are there any influencing factors that are not covered by the measurement framework? Or are there any additional indicators that could be added?

Shelter Scotland finds the measurement framework very useful in focusing on Pockets (which looks at maximising households resources), Prospects (which focuses on improving the life chances of children living in poverty) and Places (which focuses on well-designed sustainable places). This is particularly the case, as it addresses some of the important points that we have addressed above in relation to the indicators that income-based measures do not adequately focus on.

There are several factors that influence child poverty and the potential intensity of the impact it has on children, which are more difficult to measure and may not easily be included in a measurement framework. While they are difficult to quantify, social networks and community amenities, for example, make a real difference on the ground. The kind of social network, including the support of family members and friends that families experiencing relative poverty can rely on, can make a significant difference to the impact poverty has on the affected children.

In order to support some of these networks and work to prevent, among other issues, youth homelessness, our Safe and Sound project supports young people and their families in practical ways when they experience family relationship breakdowns through, for example, family mediation, re-establishing positive contact (if appropriate) and supporting young people, who need to move away. Our work illustrates the importance of local implementation and of approaching child poverty and related issues, such as youth homelessness, in a comprehensive way that recognises and adequately addresses multiple complex needs.

There are some additional indicators that could be added to the grid, particularly around the Pockets measure. This would help to capture the real-life experiences of children growing up in a poor household. The indicator 'parent households not managing financially', for example, is useful but does not provide enough detail or clarity on what that means for these families. It would also be important to identify why they are not managing financially and how much of this is as a result of current government policies. Capturing this information at a local authority level would help focus attention and resources and contribute to local solutions in order to address some of the issues faced by low-income families.

Some suggestions of additional Pockets indicators:

- Number of parents who have had their income sanctioned.  
An example of why this would be important to look at is a lone-parent household with three children under 10, who are being supported by Shelter Scotland and were left with just £17 per week following a sanction. With the help of a support worker this was overturned and the benefit re-instated in under a week. However, there are a many families that do not have access to this support and this case is not uncommon.
- Number of families using a food bank to make ends meet.  
A snapshot survey of families being supported by Shelter Scotland's Foundations First project identified that 23 per cent of families being

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supported because they were in housing crisis also needed to use a food bank to ensure their children had enough food. This is reflected in the recent CAS Poverty Premium report, which identified that 43 per cent of low-income households were cutting back on food spending.<sup>31</sup>

- Number of families struggling to meet their utility bill costs.  
The above-mentioned Shelter Scotland snapshot survey identified that 44 per cent of families struggling to meet fuel costs. This too was highlighted as a major issue for low-income households in the CAS report with 24 per cent cutting back on gas/electricity.<sup>32</sup>
- Number of families affected by the benefit cap.  
With the further reduction in the amount of benefit entitlement due to come into place later this year the impact will be greater on large families. A four-child family (all under 10) being supported by Shelter Scotland was recently notified that their housing benefit income would be reduced as a result of the benefit cap – the family's rent is £504 per 4-week period, the unemployed lone parent has to pay £408 of this herself, as she will receive just £96 housing benefit as a result of the benefit cap.
- Number of families accessing support from the Scottish Welfare Fund.  
This would be a useful indicator to measure locally, as many people do not realise what support is available or how to access it.
- Number of families in rent arrears and at risk of losing their home.  
While this may be difficult to monitor for the private rented sector, it would provide an early warning system for local authority and social landlords and could lead to preventative support services being put in place, similar to the Foundations First project in Renfrewshire.

Additional poverty indicators under Places:

- Number of children living in bad housing, including housing that is sub-standard or overcrowded.  
As mentioned above, living in bad housing, such as sub-standard or overcrowded properties, has a significant impact on the current and future health, education, economic prospects and general well-being of children. Considering this, it is of prime importance to tackle bad housing in order to try to break the cycle of child poverty in Scotland.
- Number of children living in temporary accommodation.  
Over 5,200 children in Scotland lived in temporary accommodation on the 31 March 2016 - an increase of 13 per cent compared to the previous year.<sup>33</sup> As mentioned above, in order to flourish and be able to take full advantage of various opportunities, children need a stable environment.<sup>34</sup>
- Number of homelessness applications made by households containing children.  
9327 homelessness applications from households containing children were made in Scotland in 2015-16.<sup>35</sup> Shelter Scotland would like to see this indicator included.

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<sup>31</sup> Citizens Advice Scotland (2016), [Paying more to be poor: The poverty premium in energy, telecommunications and finance in Scotland](#).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Scottish Government (2016), [Homelessness in Scotland: 2015-16](#).

<sup>34</sup> Hogg, S., *et al* (2015), *op.cit.*

<sup>35</sup> Scottish Government (2016), [Homelessness in Scotland: Annual Publication 2015/16 Tables](#), Table 7.

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- Number of children deemed to be homeless.  
While the Homelessness Statistics for Scotland include the above-mentioned information on the number of homelessness applications from households containing children, it does not report on the actual number of children deemed to be homeless in Scotland. This number is likely to differ to a significant degree from the number of homelessness applications made by households containing children, as these households often contain more than one child. Moreover, households submitting a homelessness application might not necessarily be deemed to actually be homeless. Shelter Scotland believes that this information is vital in order to assess homelessness and child poverty and should therefore be centrally published on a regular basis and included in the measurement framework.

Shelter Scotland helps over half a million people every year struggling with bad housing or homelessness through our advice, support and legal services. And we campaign to make sure that, one day, no one will have to turn to us for help.

We're here so no one has to fight bad housing or homelessness on their own.

Please support us at [shelterscotland.org](https://shelterscotland.org)

Registered charity in England and Wales (263710) and in Scotland (SC002327)

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