

The Challenges of combating poverty: difficult choices

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Why poverty matters

Poverty influences virtually all life outcomes:

- Health
- Education
- Risk of being a victim of crime, risk of becoming a criminal
- Poverty in childhood has lifetime scarring impact

Social justice

The Role of Government: supporting families and improving parenting:

Reduce pressures

- Rights and legal protection
- Financial support
- Support in kind

For example:

- Access to maternity and paternity leave
- Flexible working and flexible childcare
- Targeted benefits

Enhance capabilities

- Information and guidance
- Skills and training
- Interventions

For example

- Before and after birth, midwife and health visitor support
- Family Intervention programmes

**Intervening to safeguard
children**

Advising on poverty and inequality: key questions

- Is the priority reducing poverty, reducing inequality, or reducing social class gradient in outcomes? Different policy responses for all each
- Eg. Reduce poverty by increasing family incomes
- Eg. Reduce inequality by raising taxes at the top
- Eg. Reduce social class gradient by forensic attention to educational attainment of poorer children

Whom are we most concerned about?

- The very poorest, who may also have complex problems requiring multiple interventions
- Families with young children where poverty may have long term impact on future outcomes
- Young adults without children, who also may be subject to the scarring impact of worklessness in young adulthood
- Pensioners, who are 'deserving,' having contributed their whole lives and may still be left behind

Staged and iterative process

- Clarify with First Minister her priorities
- Work with analysts to establish the numbers; how many in each group, how deep their poverty,
- Policy review to establish what would make a difference: increase family income; reduce family costs
- Consult with academics, voluntary organisations, local authorities, people living in poverty
- Do the numbers and the personal stories resonate? Are there practical solutions?

Scotland, what we know so far

- After housing costs, half of working age adults in poverty live in working households
- More than half of children in poverty live in a household where at least one adult is working; poverty more severe in families with 3 or more children, and families with younger children
- High risk of poverty (AHC) among those in private rented sector.
- Only group where poverty numbers decline after housing costs is pensioners: 15% BHC, 12% AHC

Recommendations: 3 themes

- In work poverty
- Housing (and fuel) costs
- Life chances of young people

In work poverty: families with Children

Key challenge is combining affordability, flexibility, and quality of childcare

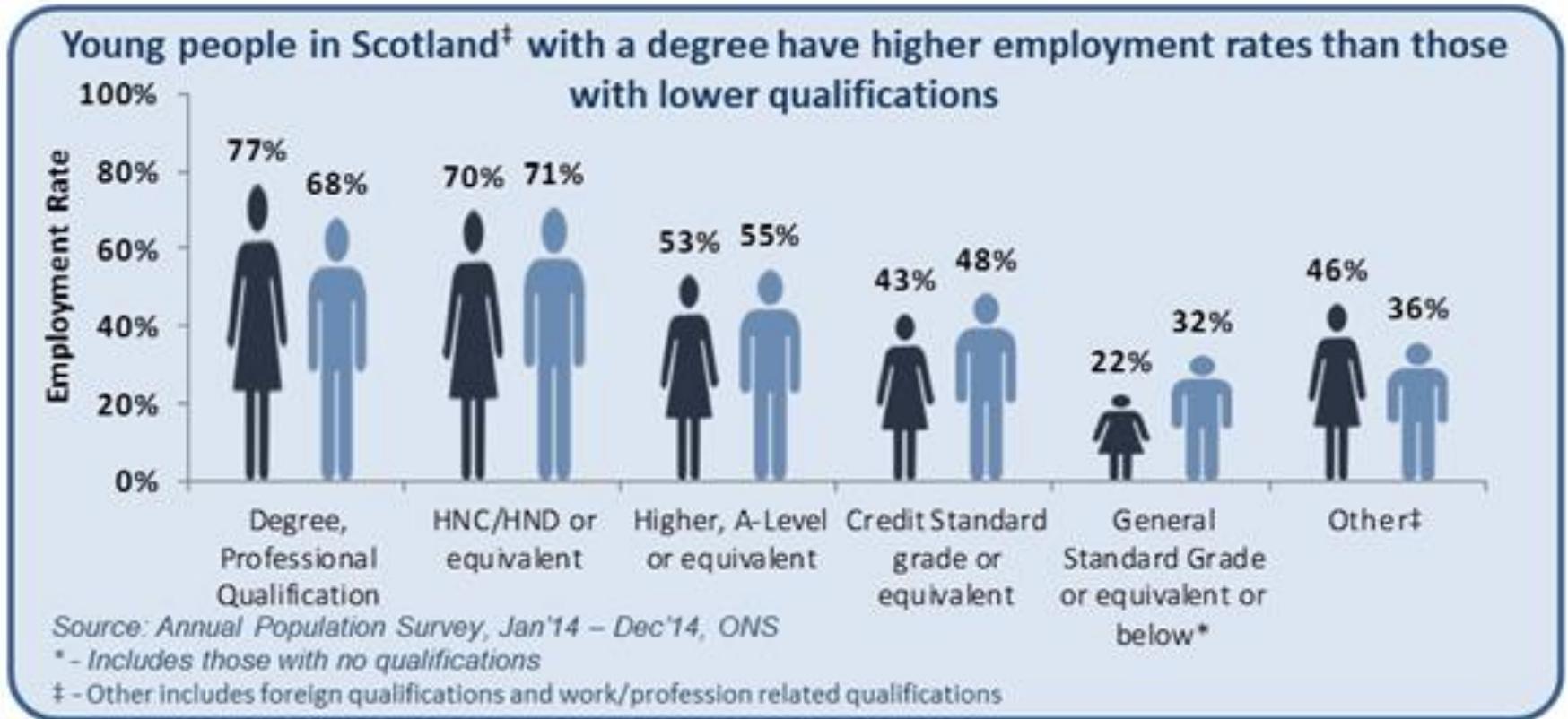
- Affordability makes it more likely that employment increases family income
- Flexibility widens work opportunities
- Quality contributes to *ameliorating the impact of poverty*, helps to ensure school readiness similar to better off peers

Life chances of young people

Key challenge is building an evidence base on adolescence and young adulthood as robust as our evidence base on under fives. What do we know?

- Physical and mental health needs
- Educational attainment and choices
- Career paths for the non academic young people
- How do we build an economy in Scotland that has enough well paying jobs for upcoming generations?

Young People's employment and qualification rates



2 cross cutting recommendations

1. Do targeted services have to be stigmatising: can we deliver public services to all with dignity and respect?
2. Comprehensive equalities legislation could include socio-economic status as a 'protected characteristic' like race, religion, disability

Final thoughts

- Tackling inequality harder than tackling poverty: winners and losers
- Proportionate universalism must include targeted as well as universal services
- Family income alone does not guarantee good outcomes for children, it lessens the likelihood of poor outcomes, and many children growing up in poverty do very well