

Stigma and Poverty.

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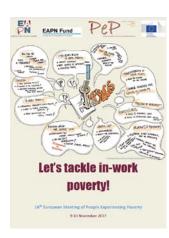
THE POVERTY ALLIANCE

- Formally established in 1992 25 years old last year
- Membership organisations Third sector organisations, trade unions, community groups, faith groups and local authorities
- What we do
 - Campaigns
 - Policy
 - Research
 - Fieldwork CAAG
 - Projects: Menu for Change
 - Living Wage Accreditation









CAUSES OF POVERTY

Low incomes and high costs

SOLUTIONS TO POVERTY

Higher incomes and lower costs

WHAT WE PUSH FOR

- Scottish Living Wage
- Scottish Social Security Bill
- Broader welfare reform
- Top up of Child Benefit
- Poverty-aware work practices
- Free school breakfasts



- An end to the need food banks
- Positive representations of people experiencing poverty
- Better childcare provision



Fair, equal and responsive DESIGNING A SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM FOR SCOTLAND









PROGRESS

- Ambitious Child Poverty targets set by the Scottish Government
- Dignity and Respect key pillars of the new social security system
- Recent research from FrameWorks Institute shows how narratives can be shifted
- Narrative is shifting, but needs more work



Talking about POVERTY

THE STIGMA OF POVERTY

jobcentreplus

- Job centre
- Housing
- Education
- Health







WHAT PEOPLE THINK



- Evidence suggests that public attitudes to poverty have hardened in recent years both in terms of what poverty is and what causes poverty
- However, it is important to emphasise that public attitudes are often inconsistent or contradictory
- Public opinion varies according to the context in which poverty is being discussed
- To change public opinion, we need to shift the narrative

Anti-Stigma Campaigning

- The Stick Your Labels Campaign was born in 2010 out of the EPIC project
- A direct result of what was raised by people experiencing poverty
- Re-launched in 2015 with a new series of pledges
- Over 60 organisations in Scotland have given their support including all five of Scotland's party leaders
- Clear shift in narrative as a result
- Currently undergoing a re-framing process and will be back!







THE IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE

- 'we must treat the causes of poverty at their source...whether that's debt, family break-down, educational failure or addiction' (David Cameron, 2012)
- 'We've lost a lot of our cooking skills and poor people don't know how to cook' (Baroness Jenkins, 2014)
- 'As Ed Miliband has reminded us, "the clue is in the name". We are the party born of the self–respect and solidarity of working communities.' (Rachel Reeves, 2014)
- 'You cannot say that you're struggling on £50 a week with a widescreen TV in the background!' (Twitter user re: Benefits St, 2016)
- You need to live in the real world the benefit system which I support gets abused. Those crying poverty do so because they'd rather spend our cash on Sky, booze, fags etc rather than the important things' (Twitter user re: Foodbank usage, 2017)

THE IMPACT OF STIGMA

- Evidence suggests that the stigmatisation of people in receipt of benefits has negative impacts on their well-being and may reduce benefit take up. This weakens the welfare state, something we may all need one day.
- By blaming individuals for their poverty, we are ignoring the real causes and failing to hold Governments to account.
- In order to tackle poverty effectively, it is important to get the message across that people experiencing poverty are people just like anybody else.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

- I felt small, simply because I was on benefits did not mean I should have no choice, I want to be happy' (SWF)
- 'Being on low wages, sometimes you feel judged by other people. People who work in better jobs- jobs that maybe they've studied for- they often work the same amount of hours as I do, but they get paid a lot more. I think sometimes people in other better paid jobs will look at me, and maybe think that I'm useless or not that clever'. (In work poverty)
- 'It's no like me, I like providing for myself, I like doing the shopping myself. So coming in here and begging was a bit embarrassing you know. But at the end of the day you've got to do it, if you want to eat you've got to do it' (Foodbank research)

In groups please divide the cards into language that is **progressive**, language that is **problematic** but can be powerful, and language that should **never be used** when talking about people living in poverty.



THE ANSWERS!

Language that should never be used:

- The poor / Undeserving poor / Deserving poor (as this implies an undeserving poor)
- Work-shy
- Underclass
- Welfare dependency / handouts / benefit culture / Languishing on benefit
- Sponger, scroungers
- Sink estates

USE CAUTIOUSLY!

Some language has the potential to make either a positive or a negative contribution to challenging poverty and must be used with care.

- Poor people
- Impoverished
- Poverty-stricken
- Poor places / Deprived places
- Peripheral housing estates / Estates
- Marginalised / Peripheral / Hidden
- The downtrodden
- Hard working families / hard working majority (as this implies that there are work-shy families)
- Benefit cheats

Respectful and progressive language

Some language emphasises that the problem is the condition of poverty (rather than the problem being the people who experience poverty). For example:

- People experiencing poverty
- Areas with deprivation / areas with poverty
- Low income living / living life on a low income



WHY IT MATTERS



- Negative attitudes about people on low income and the benefits system weakens the welfare state – this is not good for any of us
- Changing attitudes can be a condition for changing policy and legislation



- Stigma has a real and damaging impact on people living on low incomes
- Time wasted blaming individuals for poverty is better spent holding the government to account

WHAT NEXT?

- Poverty Alliance is working with around ten local authorities to develop actions to tackle the stigma of poverty
- Working with young people to prevent negative attitudes towards people experiencing poverty developing
- Work to encourage other organisations, particularly those which deliver to services, to come on board
- Get in touch!

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