

EQUALITY AND FAIRER SCOTLAND BUDGET STATEMENT 2021-22



Scottish Government
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EQUALITY AND FAIRER SCOTLAND BUDGET STATEMENT 2021-22

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FOREWORD



This year's budget, including this Equality and Fairer Scotland Budget Statement alongside it, is being published in the context of one of the greatest challenges of any of our lifetimes - the global COVID-19 pandemic and the unprecedented measures needed to combat it.

We have all had to face up to the huge changes that this has brought but the impacts have fallen disproportionately on particular groups and on their rights. Older and disabled people, along with some minority ethnic communities, have been harder hit by the direct effects of the virus itself. Disadvantages have been compounded for those who have traditionally been more disadvantaged in our labour market. Women have had to shoulder most of an increase in unpaid caring responsibilities, adding to their already disproportionate contribution. Some of the impacts of the pandemic, particularly on young people, will be felt over an extended time.

While the pandemic has brought many of these issues into ever sharper focus they are not new and that is why, over time, we have worked to improve the Equality and Fairer Scotland Budget Statement, within overall changes to the budget process.

This year's Statement has therefore been developed to provide a clearer focus on the main challenges that are faced, across different portfolios, in relation to socio-economic equality, on the basis of the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010, and on the realisation of human rights. It also sets out the main ways that these challenges are being addressed through our budget decisions.

The need for that focus is more compelling than ever. We remain committed to addressing the equality and human rights challenges that we face, through the pandemic and beyond.



Kate Forbes
Cabinet Secretary for Finance



Shirley-Anne Somerville
Cabinet Secretary for Social
Security and Older People

INTRODUCTION

The publication of the Equality and Fairer Scotland Budget Statement (EFSBS) alongside the Scottish Budget 2021-22 highlights the consistent commitment of the Scottish Government to examine the impact of the Scottish Budget on Scottish citizens.

The Context for the Scottish Budget

The Scottish Budget delivers against a national vision of wellbeing and 11 national outcomes (See Figure 1). But, this year the Scottish Budget is being proposed in very uncertain times. The ongoing and unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic is at a critical stage. In recent months the development and subsequent roll-out of viable vaccines has provided some good news but this is set against a situation where the NHS are required to cope with a new variation of the virus causing rising infection rates, hospitalisations and deaths. In addition, the withdrawal of Scotland from the European Union (EU) and the growing climate emergency combine with the pandemic to provide a difficult context for recovery.

Figure 1: The Scottish National Performance Framework



The Scottish Budget seeks to increase wellbeing by improving outcomes for Scottish society as a whole, but also its component parts. It seeks to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, foster good relations and progressively realise human rights through both the generation of revenues and the allocation of expenditure.

With regard to the Scottish Budget this means:

1. Revenue should be raised in a way that does not discriminate directly or indirectly against any specific group on the grounds of protected characteristics or socio-economic disadvantage and provides sufficient funds to progressively realise human rights.
2. Allocations and expenditures should not be directly or indirectly discriminatory and should be implemented in such a way to advance equality in its broadest sense.
3. The budget process and documentation should be transparent – allowing people to engage with and understand the budget.¹

Every year the Programme for Government sets out the delivery aims of the Scottish Government that are implemented in the Budget. The Programme for Government for 2020-21 focused on the policies needed to ensure Scotland's economic, health and social recovery from COVID-19 and to re-set progress towards our national outcomes. It committed to:

- A national mission to create new jobs, good jobs and green jobs – with a particular focus on young people, supporting retraining and investing in a Green New Deal to tackle climate change.
- Promoting lifelong health and wellbeing – by tackling COVID-19, remobilising and reforming the NHS and social care, and tackling health inequalities.
- Promoting equality and helping young people to fulfil their potential.

The Context of Inequality at the Time of the 2021-22 Scottish Budget

In order to fulfil our duties under the Public Sector Equality and Fairer Scotland Duties, including the Scottish Specific Regulations, and our commitments on human rights, the Scottish Budget is assessed for its impact on the Scottish population. In practice, this means aiming to meet minimum standards of rights and reducing measurable differences in progressive outcomes by protected characteristics (age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation) and by socio-economic disadvantage (low income or wealth; area deprivation; lack of material resources; background) when compared with the rest of the population.

We know that inequality in outcomes occur for people in protected groups no matter how rich or poor they are. For example, discrimination in the workplace, hate crime in society, or the inability for an older and/or disabled person to buy or adapt a home that is suitable for their needs will all negatively impact on life chances and wellbeing.

We also know that outcomes are worse for people living in poverty, especially those who have been living in poverty for a number of years.

¹ Background briefing paper on human rights budgeting and budget analysis by Ann Blyberg for the Scottish Human Rights Commission.

Further, we know that there are close connections within and between the protected characteristics and socio-economic disadvantage. Combinations of different protected characteristics and socio-economic disadvantage can layer, reinforce and entrench poor outcomes for people. Analysis shows that people in protected groups were more likely to be experiencing poverty and to be living in the more deprived communities in Scotland. Prevalence of poverty is particularly high for children, lone parents (over 90 per cent are women), minority ethnic people, disabled people, and parents of young children.² Similarly we know that people with limiting long-term physical or mental health conditions, lone parents, people aged 25-34 and some ethnic minority groups, such as white Polish, were more likely to live in the most deprived communities.³

Evidence shows that the health, social and economic harms arising from the direct and indirect effects of contracting COVID-19, as well as from the measures put in place to control the spread of the virus, are significant and unequal. Further, these unequal COVID-19 harms are impacting disproportionately on people who were already experiencing worse life chances and outcomes across many domains, such as income, wealth, living standards, labour market participation, health, social capital and education. The crisis has also drawn out more harshly the localised effect of deprivation as a focus for multiple inequalities and poor outcomes.^{4,5}

Commitments to Equality, Fairer Scotland and Human Rights

Tackling inequality was already central to the Scottish Government's policies prior to COVID-19, with many actions already taken forward or planned. These are set out in documents including the Race Equality Framework and Action Plan; the Gender Pay Gap Action Plan; A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People; A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People: Employment Action Plan; British Sign Language (BSL) National Plan; A Fairer Scotland for Older People; A Connected Scotland (our strategy for tackling social isolation and loneliness); Equally Safe (our strategy for tackling violence against women and girls); Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan; and the Fair Work Action Plan.

However, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights⁶:

'COVID-19 is a test of societies, of governments, of communities and of individuals. It is a time for solidarity and cooperation to tackle the virus, and to mitigate the effects, often unintended, of measures designed to halt the spread of COVID-19. Respect for human rights across the spectrum, including economic, social, cultural, and civil and political rights, will be fundamental to the success of the public health response and recovery from the pandemic'.

2 [Additional poverty analysis 2020 – gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/additional-poverty-analysis-2020/pages/introduction.aspx)

3 [Scottish surveys core questions: 2018 analytical tables – gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-surveys-core-questions-2018-analytical-tables/pages/introduction.aspx)

4 [Scotland's Wellbeing: The Impact of COVID-19 | National Performance Framework](https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotland-wellbeing-the-impact-of-covid-19/pages/introduction.aspx)

5 [How coronavirus has affected equality and human rights | Equality and Human Rights Commission \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/coronavirus-has-affected-equality-and-human-rights)

6 [OHCHR | COVID-19 Guidance](https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/covid-19-guidance)

The **Public Sector Equality Duty** (PSED) requires public authorities (including the Scottish Government) to have due regard to the need to: eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not.

The **Fairer Scotland Duty** (FSD) arises from Part 1 of the Equality Act 2010 and came into force in Scotland from 1 April 2018. It sits alongside the PSED, and places a legal responsibility on the Scottish Government and other public bodies to consider actively how decisions can reduce inequality of outcome resulting from socio-economic disadvantage. This consideration should be informed by evidence of inequality and the potential impacts of decisions upon disadvantaged groups.

The norms and standards contained in **international human rights** conventions include not only the civil and political rights found in the European Convention of Human Rights – such as the rights to freedom of expression; a fair trial; privacy; and non-discrimination – but also economic, social and cultural rights. For example, everyone in Scotland has the right to an adequate standard of living, including both adequate housing and adequate food. Other key rights include the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; to education; to social security; and to fair employment, as well as the right to take part in cultural life. UN treaties also provide specific rights and protections against discrimination in the enjoyment of a wide-range of human rights for women, children, disabled people, and ethnic, religious and other minorities.

Equality, poverty and human rights organisations have raised a broad range of issues, reflecting the particular impact of COVID-19 and our response to the pandemic on the communities they represent.⁷ These issues cut across all Scottish Government portfolios, reinforcing the fact that promoting equality, tackling poverty and advancing human rights needs to be at the heart of all decision-making during these unprecedented times. The Scottish Government has consistently committed to promoting equality and human rights and, within the last year, has made further specific commitments:

- We have committed to continue to support the National Taskforce on Human Rights Leadership, including delivery of a participatory approach to the development of the proposed human rights Bill.
- We will review the operation of the PSED, providing an opportunity for the Scottish Government, listed authorities, third-sector organisations, professional and improvement agencies, and other interested parties, to consider the future direction of travel for the overall regime and for the Scottish Specific Duties. This will also provide an opportunity to consider how any changes to the regime might work in practice, the implications of any changes for listed authorities and how we can best evidence improvements in the outcomes for people across the range of protected characteristics.

⁷ [How coronavirus has affected equality and human rights | Equality and Human Rights Commission \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/news-and-views/how-coronavirus-has-affected-equality-and-human-rights)

- We will develop a strategy to mainstream and embed equality and human rights across the Scottish Government, which is underpinned by more effective gathering and use of data and ensuring that the voice of lived experience informs policy development.
- We will launch a new funding stream to support strategic activity to mainstream and embed equality and human rights, which will align with the values and outcomes of the National Performance Framework.
- We will continue to deliver and further develop the Scottish Human Rights Defender Fellowship, in conjunction with civil society partners and the University of Dundee.
- We will ensure that Scotland engages successfully with international human rights mechanisms, including reporting performance against treaty obligations, responding to international recommendations and facilitating visits and inspections by relevant international bodies and UN Special Rapporteurs.

Further, in June 2020, the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government and the Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People announced the creation of a Social Renewal Advisory Board.⁸ The remit of the board was to build on the shifts in policy and practice that had been seen during the early months of the pandemic to drive forward equality and social justice. Board members included experts in housing, disability, poverty, homelessness, local government and the third sector with voices of lived experience being central to the work. The board reported in January 2021 with a stretching range of recommendations. The Scottish Government is currently considering its response.⁹

Structure of this Year's Equality and Fairer Scotland Budget Statement

The EFSBS is a supporting document to the Scottish Budget 2021-22 and should be read alongside the core budget document (including funding tables) and associated publications.

This year's report looks different to previous years. This main report has three sections: an introduction; a section identifying ten key existing or emerging risks resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, alongside our policy and budget response; and an overview of the impact of key aspects of this year's budget on different protected characteristic and socio-economic disadvantage.

A separate annex (Annex A) provides detailed tables presenting analysis for each budget portfolio. A second annex (Annex B) outlines the development of equality budgeting in the Scottish Government. An additional summary has also been produced. These document can be found under 'supporting documents' on the webpage.

⁸ [Social Renewal Advisory Board – gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)

⁹ [If not now, when? – Social Renewal Advisory Board report: January 2021 – gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)

TEN KEY EXISTING OR EMERGING RISKS

This section outlines key existing or emerging risks to progressing national outcomes as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and EU Exit, and considers how policy and activity funded by the 2021-22 Scottish Budget will respond to those challenges. Understanding around the risks has developed over the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, building on existing knowledge and understanding. [Scotland's Wellbeing: The Impact of COVID-19](#) provided a transparent consideration of the impact on outcomes.¹⁰ The priorities set out in the Programme for Government respond to this understanding and the ten key risks described in detail below provide greater evidence of both the risk and the policy response. The ten described are clearly not the only risks that are emerging from COVID-19 but provide a summary of key issues that need to be considered as policy responses move forward. They are set out below, aligned with the most relevant priority from the Programme for Government and the national outcomes that they contribute towards. The rest of the section provides further detail around the evidence of each risk and the policy and budget response.

Overview of Key Emerging or Existing Risks

Programme for Government priority: A national mission to create new jobs, good jobs and green jobs – with a particular focus on young people, supporting retraining and investing in a Green New Deal to tackle climate change.

Key Risk 1. Heightened risk that existing structural inequalities in the labour market will be entrenched and worsened.

Key Risk 2. Elevated risk of poorer labour market outcomes and disproportionate impacts on young people due to COVID-19.

Key Risk 3. Risk that women's unfair responsibility for unpaid care and domestic work might get worse and reduce their ability to find paid work and income.

Programme for Government priority: Promoting lifelong health and wellbeing – by tackling COVID-19, remobilising and reforming the NHS and social care and tackling health inequalities.

Key Risk 4. COVID-19 mortality and health inequalities.

Key Risk 5. Drug and alcohol deaths remain unacceptably high with the impact of COVID-19 unclear.

Key Risk 6. High and rising mental health problems made worse by COVID-19.

¹⁰ [NPF Impact of COVID-19 December 2020.pdf \(nationalperformance.gov.scot\)](#)





Programme for Government priority: Promoting equality and helping young people to fulfil their potential.

Key Risk 7. As work, public service and home schooling moved online it highlighted a real digital divide.

Key Risk 8. Risk that economic impacts and decisions about Universal Credit could increase poverty and particularly child poverty.

Key Risk 9. Risk that gaps in attainment and skills levels will have been made worse by periods of blended and virtual learning.

Key Risk 10. Evidence of rising levels of domestic abuse and reporting of sexual abuse crimes against women and children as well as risk of rising hate crime due to COVID and EU Exit.

Scotland's National Outcomes	Key existing or emerging risk that may impact on progress
 Economy	1 Inequalities in the labour market 2 Impacts on young people 3 Risk to women's participation in the labour market 4 COVID-19 mortality 7 Digital divide 8 Poverty and child poverty
 International	10 Domestic abuse and hate crime
 Poverty	1 Inequalities in the labour market 2 Impacts on young people 3 Risk to women's participation in the labour market 4 COVID-19 mortality 5 Drug and alcohol deaths 6 Mental health problems 7 Digital divide 8 Poverty and child poverty 9 Attainment and skills gaps 10 Domestic abuse and hate crime
 Communities	3 Risk to women's participation in the labour market 4 COVID-19 mortality 5 Drug and alcohol deaths 6 Mental health problems 7 Digital divide 8 Poverty and child poverty 9 Attainment and skills gaps 10 Domestic abuse and hate crime

 <p>Children and Young People</p>	<p>1 Inequalities in the labour market 2 Impacts on young people 3 Risk to women’s participation in the labour market 5 Drug and alcohol deaths 6 Mental health problems 7 Digital divide 8 Poverty and child poverty 9 Attainment and skills gaps 10 Domestic abuse and hate crime</p>
 <p>Education</p>	<p>1 Inequalities in the labour market 3 Risk to women’s participation in the labour market 4 COVID-19 mortality 7 Digital divide 8 Poverty and child poverty 9 Attainment and skills gaps</p>
 <p>Fair Work & Business</p>	<p>1 Inequalities in the labour market 2 Impacts on young people 3 Risk to women’s participation in the labour market 7 Digital divide 8 Poverty and child poverty</p>
 <p>Health</p>	<p>2 Impacts on young people 3 Risk to women’s participation in labour market 4 COVID-19 mortality 5 Drug and alcohol deaths 6 Mental health problems 7 Digital divide 8 Poverty and child poverty 9 Attainment and skills gaps 10 Domestic abuse and hate crime</p>
 <p>Environment</p>	<p>7 Digital divide</p>
 <p>Culture</p>	<p>1 Inequalities in the labour market</p>
 <p>Human Rights</p>	<p>1 Inequalities in the labour market 2 Impacts on young people 3 Risk to women’s participation in the labour market 4 COVID-19 mortality 7 Digital divide 8 Poverty and child poverty 9 Attainment and skills gaps 10 Domestic abuse and hate crime</p>

Key Risk 1. Heightened Risk that Existing Structural Inequalities in the Labour Market will be Entrenched and Worsened

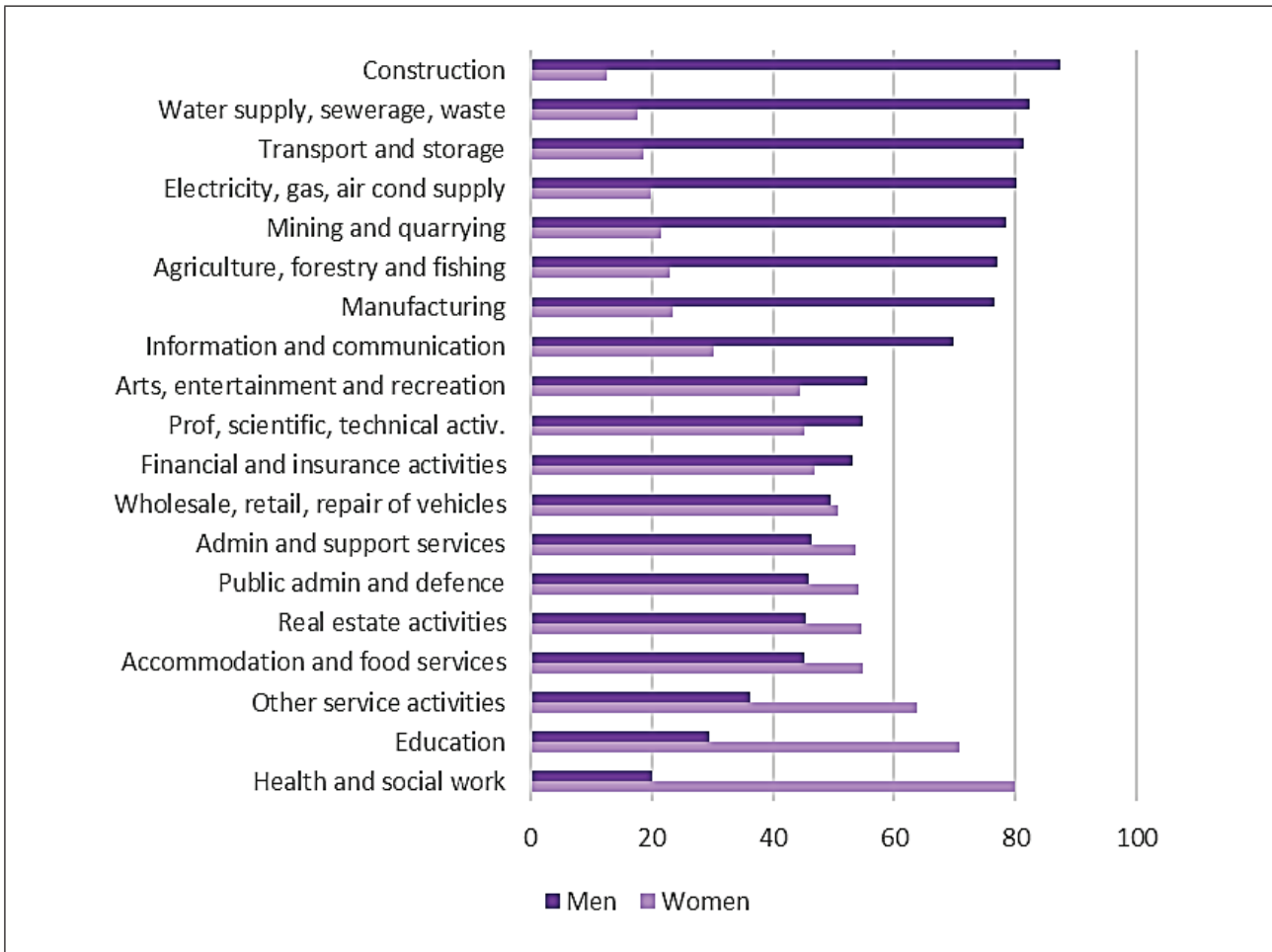
What does evidence tell us about the problem?

All projections show that both COVID-19 and EU Exit will lead to a weakening economy with poor job prospects for Scotland. In 2019,¹¹ our labour market was performing strongly and the overall employment rate was at a record high (74.8 per cent). Some progress has been made in reducing participation gaps though. For example, the Scottish Government fulfilled its commitment to reduce youth unemployment in Scotland by 40 per cent in 2017, four years ahead of schedule. However, some labour market inequalities in employment outcomes persist:

- The employment rate for women was 71.7 per cent, lower than the employment rate for men (78.0 per cent) with a gender employment gap of 6.3 percentage points.
- The employment rate for disabled people was 49.0 per cent, significantly lower than the employment rate for non-disabled people (81.6 per cent) – a disability employment rate gap of 32.6 percentage points.
- The employment rate for the minority ethnic population was 59.3 per cent, lower than the employment rate for the white population (75.7 per cent) – a gap of 16.4 percentage points.
- There is consistently considerable gaps in employment rates between local authorities in Scotland with the higher and lower performing local authorities changing little over time. In 2019, the highest employment rates were in Orkney (87.1 per cent), Perth and Kinross (83.4 per cent), and Na h-Eileanan Siar (82.3 per cent) and the lowest rates were Glasgow (67.3 per cent), Inverclyde (68.3 per cent), and Dundee (68.6 per cent).

As well as gaps in participation in the labour market there is persistent gender segregation across several industries and occupations where people are in work. For example, in 2019 16.8 per cent of women were employed in Personal Service occupations (e.g. hairdressers) compared to just 3.2 per cent of men. Almost one fifth (19.3 per cent) of men were employed in Skilled Trades (e.g. electricians) compared to just 2.2 per cent of women. Figure 2 illustrates gender segregation across Scotland's industries.

11 Statistics from the ONS Annual Population Survey – Jan-Dec 2019

Figure 2: Proportion of sector employment aged 16+ by gender, Scotland, 2019

Evidence of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people in disadvantaged groups in our labour market is still emerging and the furlough scheme has masked the true scale of impact so far. However, the crisis is likely to exacerbate existing structural labour market inequality in many instances. The latest evidence shows:

- Although there was a greater reduction in men's employment in the year to August-October 2020 compared with women, the latest HMRC Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics¹² show that at the end of October 2020, furlough take-up rates were the same for both men and women (8 per cent) in Scotland. Previously - at the end of June 2020 - furlough take-up had been higher for men.¹³ There are existing structural labour market barriers faced by women, including women's disproportionate share of caring responsibilities that could mean women are most affected in the long-term.

¹² Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics, HMRC (December 2020)

¹³ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics, HMRC (August 2020)

- The most recent data shows the employment rate of disabled people declined by 1.9 percentage points in the year to July-September 2020, and the disability employment gap widened (although the gap still remains lower than in previous years).
- There is less available evidence on employment impacts on minority ethnic groups to date in Scotland, but UK wide ONS analysis¹⁴ suggested people from Black and minority ethnic groups are over-represented in jobs with higher risk of exposure to COVID-19, accounting for 20 per cent of workers in the most at-risk occupations, despite accounting for 11 per cent of the working population. In addition, the Resolution Foundation¹⁵ found that 22 per cent of UK minority ethnic workers were furloughed during the spring 2020 lockdown were no longer working by September, more than double the rate (9 per cent) for furloughed workers as a whole.
- Claimant count rates increased in all Scottish local authorities over the year to November 2020. The greatest increases were in Glasgow City (+3.9 percentage points), Aberdeen City (+3.5 percentage points), and the City of Edinburgh (+3.2 percentage points) with the smallest rises in Orkney (+1.5 percentage points), Shetland (+1.7 percentage points), and Inverclyde (+1.7 percentage points).

What are the evidence gaps?

There are a number of key evidence gaps:

- The labour market impact of COVID-19 on disadvantaged groups is still emerging and is constantly changing due to the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic and frequent short notice changes to restrictions to deal with rising infections.
- Robust and frequent employment data for particular groups (e.g. minority ethnic groups) is a constant challenge given relatively small populations in Scotland as a base for sample surveys.
- Intersectional evidence and data is limited at occupational and industry level. For example, occupational splits for disabled men compared to disabled women.

What is our policy and budget response in 2021-22?

The pandemic has impacted on all sectors, businesses and people. However, we know some have felt the impacts more acutely, particularly women, disabled people, those from minority ethnic backgrounds and young people – a generation who have seen opportunities suddenly taken away from them, their futures made more uncertain and those most at risk from precarious work. As we rebuild our economy, and invest in the new technologies and opportunities of the future, we must ensure young people and others most adversely affected by the economic impacts of COVID-19 are at the forefront of those who will benefit. The role of employability services is pivotal in supporting those who are most at risk to the adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and will be essential in supporting Scotland's economic recovery.

¹⁴ [Office for National Statistics, Which occupations have the highest potential exposure to the coronavirus \(COVID-19\)?, May, 2020](#)

¹⁵ Resolution Foundation (2020) [Jobs, Jobs, Jobs](#)

The Scottish and Local Government Partnership Agreement, covering employability and the associated commitment to 'No One Left Behind', is a critical factor to a successful collaborative approach and will be a continued focus on tackling inequality and poverty. Early evidence suggests that the economic impact is likely to be most severe on those on lowest income, with lower skills, in the most precarious jobs. Working collaboratively, the partnership is already helping to declutter the employability landscape and provide person-centred services that are tailored to local and regional needs and rest on a strong evidence base (as opposed to top-down national programmes). Taking a place-based approach to recovery will be essential.

The principles of 'No One Left Behind', the underpinning policy for employability services in Scotland, builds on the well-established services managed by Scottish and local government and others across the Scottish employability landscape. It will ensure fairness, equality of access and user needs are at the heart of our response, with the delivery encouraging employers in the public and private sectors to create new jobs or opportunities to support target groups, including young people (e.g. Young Person's Guarantee).

We will continue to take the Scottish approach to employability that focuses on the needs of the individual first and foremost. Building on the input of citizens involved in our Lived Experience Panel, we will continue to develop an all-age system that builds on an individual's strengths and capabilities; is more joined-up; flexible; and responsive to the needs of each person and enables everyone to fulfil their potential.

Tackling the challenges of COVID-19, will need all those involved to work more closely together to develop more straightforward pathways into fair work and to join up employability services with other 'wrap around' support, such as housing and money advice.

In 2021-22, we will be further investing in the Parental Employment Support Fund (PESF), providing dedicated support for lower income families – including young and disabled parents – both groups who face particular challenges in finding and securing employment. The PESF is managed jointly with local government to provide employability support for low income parents experiencing in- and out-of-work poverty to access and progress in employment. It focuses on the priority groups identified as being at greatest risk of experiencing poverty within the Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan and supports the achievement of Scottish Government's ambition to eradicate child poverty.

Recognising the importance of flexible working patterns for many employees, particularly those with caring responsibilities (often women), to enable them to stay in paid work and develop their own careers, we will also continue to fund the provision of support and advice for employers on flexible working.

Fair Start Scotland (FSS) is our national devolved employment support service. It aims to support those who face the greatest challenges accessing the labour market. The service is voluntary with no threat of benefit sanctions. It offers personalised, one-to-one support tailored to individual circumstances. FSS provides 'day one unemployed' access to support for those who need it most, including disabled people; those with long-term

health conditions; people from minority ethnic backgrounds; lone parents; refugees; and those living in Scotland's most deprived areas. Treating people with dignity and respect is at its heart. Pre-employment support can last up to 18 months depending on the specific needs of the individual, recognising that circumstances can change due to health or personal reasons. A further 12 months of in-work support is also available to help participants sustain and progress in their employment.

The latest FSS statistics¹⁶ show that 65 per cent of people receiving FSS support reported a long-term health condition and 44 per cent reported having a disability. More than 27,000 people accessed support in the first two and a half years of delivery, and 33 per cent have been supported into work. People who started work had high rates of sustained employment:

- 71 per cent of people starting work went on to sustain employment for three months.
- 78 per cent of those who sustained employment for three months reached at least six months.
- 77 per cent of those who sustained employment for six months went on to reach at least 12 months.

We know that those further from the labour market suffer most in times of recession. We will do all we can to continue delivering the support they need to progress towards and into work. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the delivery of FSS employability services – for example, DWP had to suspend referrals to the service due to the increase in Universal Credit claims and FSS service providers had to move to remote service delivery due to restrictions on face-to-face interactions. As such, we have introduced a number of flexibilities in our delivery model to ensure that current participants remain supported and that FSS service providers can continue to engage with new participants. However, the most recent FSS statistics show that referrals and starts on the service have increased since the first COVID-19 lockdown ended, but remain lower (17 per cent and 12 per cent, respectively) than the same period the previous year (June-September 2019).

In July 2020, the Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills announced the extension of FSS delivery up to 31 March 2023. This will provide stability and continuity for FSS participants and allow us to manage the anticipated increase in demand for support arising due to COVID-19 from the most disadvantaged in our communities. We continue to invest in our employability services, ensuring they are appropriately funded to deliver for those who need support taking account of COVID-19 impacts.

We continue to take action to meet the Scottish Government's commitment to at least halve the disability employment gap by 2038. We will shortly publish our year two progress report for the A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People: Employment Action Plan and will refresh the action plan in 2021. As discussed above, there is emerging evidence that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic may negate some of the positive progress

¹⁶ Latest Statistics published 25 Nov 2020. Available at: [Scotland's Devolved Employment Services: statistical summary - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/devolved-employment-services-statistical-summary-2020-21/pages/16.aspx)

made in reducing the disability employment gap. We continue to draw on the expertise of stakeholders across sectors and will ensure that our collective action focuses on mitigating any negative impact.

Planned activity for the coming year is focused on driving recovery and helping to ensure that the needs of disabled people remain firmly in focus. This includes enhancing support for those with mental health issues, identifying any gaps in guidance on employment rights and redress; ensuring disabled young people are central to delivery of the Young Person's Guarantee; and supporting employers through our Public Social Partnership to improve the recruitment and retention of disabled people.

The City Region Deal (CRD) budget is ring-fenced and, as such, has not experienced any reductions. However, due to COVID-19 a number of projects have been delayed. Prior to COVID-19, the CRD programme was anticipated to deliver 70,000 jobs over the next 20 years. Projects have been delayed due to the difficulties in progressing them at the current time, and others are focused on those areas of the economy most sensitive to COVID-19 disruption (e.g. tourism) may require a change in scope.

The Scottish Government is working closely with each of the 12 CRDs to assist them to create opportunities for women, disabled people, ethnic minority groups and people from our most deprived communities. These groups will benefit from the employment and training opportunities created. It will also ensure that, where possible, all new services created (e.g. in housing, transport, leisure and redevelopment) are physically and financially accessible to all. This work also encompasses issues of rural depopulation and employs techniques such as Community Wealth Building to harness community participation.

Funding has been provided to continue the National Transition Training Fund (NTTF) into 2021-22. This fund was set up to support individuals who have been made unemployed, or who are at risk of redundancy as a result of COVID-19, to retrain towards jobs where there is projected to be demand.

How are we are working to evaluate policies and close evidence gaps?

We are creating a 'What Works?' Institute to develop and test robust, evidence-led inclusive and representative approaches to changing public attitudes in Scotland to girls and women's equality and rights. This aims to dismantle stereotypes about what girls and women should study, work at, and be.

The development and implementation of No One Left Behind represents a significant change in the funding and delivery of employability services across Scotland. In sum, No One Left Behind seeks to:

- 1) place people at the centre of the design and delivery of employability services;
- 2) promote a strengthened partnership approach where government, third and private sector work collaboratively; and
- 3) identify local needs and make informed, evidence-based decisions, flexing these to meet emerging labour market demands (including the EU Exit and COVID-19).

As part of our commitment to continuous improvement, we will undertake a four year evaluation of the No One Left Behind approach. This will ensure it focuses on the needs of the individual first and foremost – a person-centred system that is more flexible and responsive to the changing labour market, tackles inequalities and grows Scotland’s economy. The evaluation will use both qualitative and quantitative research methods, combining in-house analysis and commissioned external work. The evaluation approach will be objective, independent and credible, focusing on both the strengths and weaknesses of No One Left Behind to draw conclusions about the ultimate effectiveness of the approach, improve service design and delivery and ensure effective local partnership. We anticipate that evaluation plans will be finalised by April 2021.

Key Risk 2. Elevated Risk of Poorer Labour Market Outcomes and Disproportionate Impacts on Young People due to COVID-19

What does evidence tell us about the problem?

Young people have shown to be consistently among the most impacted groups in our labour market by the effects of COVID-19.¹⁷

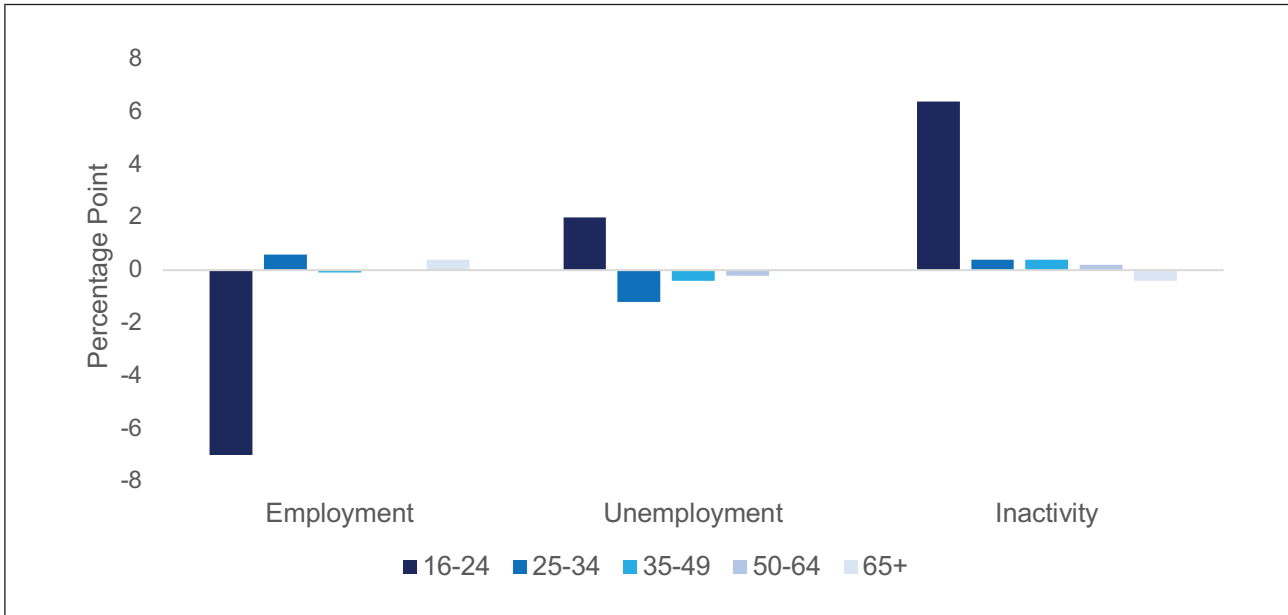
Take-up of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS)¹⁸ in the UK has been highest for among younger people. This is partly due to their higher prevalence in the workforces of the most affected sectors (e.g. accommodation and food) and being more likely than other ages to work in more precarious forms of work (e.g. zero hours contracts). Furlough take-up reached 32 per cent of eligible employments at the end of July 2020 for under 18s compared with 18 per cent for all ages. As of 31 October 2020, take-up among under 18s had fallen to 11 per cent but was still the joint highest rate (alongside people aged 65+). Under 18s and 18-24 year olds have consistently had among the highest take-up rates of furlough throughout this crisis with knock on effects on income.

Compared with other ages, young people in Scotland have also seen the greatest changes in employment, unemployment and inactivity (Figure 3). Over the year from October 2019 to September 2020, there was a 7.0 percentage point fall in the employment rate of 16-24 year olds. All other age groups saw marginal changes in employment rates. Similarly, while 16-24 year olds saw a 2.0 percentage point rise in unemployment, all other age groups saw a fall in unemployment. The inactivity rate of 16-24 year olds rose by 6.4 percentage points while other age groups again saw much smaller changes.

17 [Young-workers-in-the-coronavirus-crisis.pdf \(resolutionfoundation.org\)](#)

18 [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics: December 2020 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Figure 3: Annual change in employment unemployment and inactivity rates by age, Scotland, October 2019 – September 2020



Source: ONS, Annual Population Survey, Oct 2019 – Sep 2020

Young people also typically experience disproportionate impacts during economic shocks partly due to making up a higher share of those in precarious work, such as zero hours contracts, part-time work and temporary employment, and are often working in the sectors most vulnerable during recessions (e.g. retail and hospitality). In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crash and recession, the unemployment rate of young people (16-24) in Scotland reached 21.8 per cent.¹⁹

The COVID-19 crisis has been uniquely damaging to the employment prospects of young people given that the sectors most affected by COVID-19 and the necessary restrictions on activity, often provide entry-level jobs for young people. For example, over 40 per cent of the employment of 16-24 year olds in Scotland is in the retail, accommodation, food²⁰ – sectors particularly affected by COVID-19 restrictions.

Without government intervention, this year's education leavers, particularly those with lower qualifications, could face long-term scarring of their career prospects due to entering the labour market during a recession. Periods of unemployment at a young age can be especially damaging given that the effects, such as a reduction in earnings, compound over time. Academic research finds a prior period of unemployment to be the best predictor of an individual's future risk of unemployment.²¹

¹⁹ ONS, Annual Population Survey, January-December 2011

²⁰ ONS, Annual Population Survey, October 2019 – September 2020

²¹ <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/economics/staff/swarulampalam/publications/wagelossintrod.pdf>

What are the evidence gaps?

- Greater evidence on differential impacts among young people would be useful. For example, disabled young people or young people from ethnic minority groups.
- Any longer-term scarring effects resulting from periods of unemployment among young people will take a long time to emerge in data and analysis.

What is our policy and budget response in 2021-22?

In 2020, the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture set out details on the Young Person's Guarantee (YPG).²² This will ensure everyone aged between 16 and 24 has the opportunity of work, education or training.²³ We are working to effectively integrate and align YPG with local and national employability provision through the 'No One Left Behind' approach. This includes, for example, Our Future Now and Discovering Your Potential, Fair Start Scotland, Community Jobs Scotland, the Employability Fund and the Parental Employment Support Fund. This alignment also extends to working with UK Government, local government and other stakeholders to support the implementation of Kickstart, which is a key element of the UK Government's youth offer. This alignment activity will help ensure additional elements are added to Kickstart that reflect the principles and ethos of the Scottish approach, such as wrap-around provision, access to quality training (including apprenticeships) and supporting the real Living Wage.

How are we working to evaluate policies and close evidence gaps?

Our commitment to producing a Measurement and Evaluation Plan for the YPG is set out in the activity plan, published on 5 November 2020.²⁴ We are working with partners from local government, the third sector, the business community, and young people themselves to develop this plan. This will help our understanding of how the Guarantee is working for young people. This will also inform our assessment of the extent to which the Guarantee achieves its intended outcomes.

As part of the development process, we are working with partners to identify other key areas of work that the Guarantee's measurement framework and evaluation approach should align with. This includes, but is not limited to, the Shared Measurement Framework²⁵ and Annual Participation Measure,²⁶ alongside planned No One Left Behind, Developing the Young Workforce and Fair Start Scotland evaluation activity.

In line with the overarching aims of the Guarantee, we will embed considerations of equality and human rights into the measurement framework and evaluation approach. This will include, where possible and appropriate, analysis of protected characteristics, to determine the extent to which the Guarantee is accessible to, and meets the needs of, young people from different social and economic backgrounds, and how it can be improved.

22 [Delivering the Youth Guarantee - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/delivering-the-youth-guarantee/pages/6/)

23 [The Young Person's Guarantee | My World of Work](https://www.gov.scot/publications/my-world-of-work/pages/6/)

24 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/young-persons-guarantee-phase-1-activity-plan/>

25 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/one-left-behind-review-employability-services/pages/6/>

26 <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/publications-statistics/statistics/annual-participation-measure/?page=1&statisticCategoryId=7&order=date-desc>

We are complementing our quarterly National Statistics publication, which measures labour market outcomes for young people, with a monthly publication. We intend to publish a regular Youth Employment dashboard which will provide a breakdown of key employment indicators by local authority area and across Scotland.²⁷

We are also working with Skills Development Scotland (SDS), HM Revenue & Customs and the Department for Work and Pensions to explore ways we can improve data sharing, for example to enhance reporting of the Participation Measure and better understand what activity young people are engaged in.

Key Risk 3. Risk that Women’s Unfair Responsibility for Unpaid Care and Domestic Work Might Get Worse and Reduce Their Ability to Find Paid Work and Income

What does evidence tell us about the problem?

Even before COVID-19, women already did a disproportionate amount of unpaid housework and caring in the household.²⁸ In 2014-15, for example, women spent an average of 310 minutes per day on these activities, compared to an average of 230 minutes per day among men.²⁹ This responsibility for unpaid care and domestic work can restrict women from entering the labour market – there is a much higher proportion of economically inactive women (25.3 per cent) that cite “looking after family/home” as the reason, compared with men (6.8 per cent).³⁰ These responsibilities also act as a significant constraint on women’s choice of jobs, often compelling women to seek part-time or flexible work.³¹ These are not universally available and far less readily available in some occupations and pay levels than others – for example, it has been estimated that only 11 per cent of jobs paying £20,000 or more (full-time equivalent) are advertised as being available on a flexible basis.³² Part-time work is most common in low-paid, female-dominated occupations, such as sales, secretarial work and social care, and part-time workers earn less per hour on average.³³ These factors may therefore result in women taking on jobs for which they are overqualified.

Periods of part-time employment or unemployment have long-term effects on pay and progression, for reasons including accumulating less labour-market experience, fewer opportunities for job progression, and gender bias and discrimination within workplaces and systems for progression.³⁴ Mothers who take career breaks to care for children, for example, not only forego time at work which could have contributed to progression, but when they return to work they often move into lower-skilled or lower-paid jobs with limited scope for progression, often on a part-time basis, which contributes to a pay gap between working mothers and other working women.

27 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/employment-unemployment-and-inactivity-for-young-people-16-24-years-scotland-and-uk---jul-2019-to-jun-2020/>

28 Scottish Household Survey, 2018

29 [Time use survey 2014-2015: results for Scotland - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/time-use-survey-2014-2015-results-for-scotland/)

30 ONS, Annual Population Survey, July 2019 - June 2020

31 [Gender Pay Gap Action Plan: Analytical Annex \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/gender-pay-gap-action-plan-analytical-annex/)

32 Family Friendly Working Scotland, 2018. *The Timewise Flexible Jobs Index Scotland*.

33 [Policymakers \(closesthegap.org.uk\)](https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/)

34 [Gender Pay Gap Action Plan: Analytical Annex \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/gender-pay-gap-action-plan-analytical-annex/)

How a disproportionate share of caring responsibilities, among other gender-based barriers, can restrict women's employment, is evident in rates of underemployment and proportions in secure employment. Underemployment is where someone wants to work more hours in the same job, a different job with more hours, or an additional job. A higher proportion of women in employment (7.5 per cent) in Scotland are classed as underemployed than men (6.7 per cent) and a slightly lower proportion of women (96.1 per cent) are in secure employment than men (96.8 per cent) (working in either a permanent job or a temporary job who do not want a permanent job).³⁵

Some of the sectors consistently impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, with subsequent effects on employment and income, have high rates of female employment, for example in Other Services, where women make up 63.8 per cent of employment.³⁶ Furlough rates for men and women have been similar throughout the crisis, but analysis by HMRC found that men placed on the Job Retention Scheme have been more likely to be retained by their employer than women.³⁷

Evidence suggests that with school and nursery closures, housework and childcare has fallen more on women than men, which may make it harder for them to maintain or take on employment.³⁸ There is evidence that mothers have been around twice as likely to take unpaid time off work to look after children as fathers.³⁹ As of the end of June 2020, 16 per cent of women in Great Britain who said that COVID-19 was affecting their work said that this was because they were having to work around home schooling responsibilities (compared to 4 per cent of men), while 18 per cent of women whose work was affected said that they would have to work around childcare responsibilities (compared to 4 per cent of men).⁴⁰ Research by the IFS in May 2020 found that mothers were more likely than fathers to have quit or lost their job, or to have been furloughed, since the start of the lockdown.⁴¹ Compared with fathers, mothers are spending less time on paid work but more time on household responsibilities and the differences in work patterns between mothers and fathers have grown since before the crisis.

Women are also the vast majority of lone parents, who may be less likely to have someone to share childcare with, making paid work harder.

35 ONS, Annual Population Survey, Jan-Dec 2019

36 ONS, Annual Population Survey, Jan-Dec 2019

37 [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics: secondary analysis of ended furloughs - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-statistics-secondary-analysis-of-ended-furloughs)

38 See for example: <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/app/uploads/2019/10/Risky-business.pdf>;
<https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14860>

39 [Mothers on the lowest incomes are nine times more at risk of losing their job due to school closures in the UK - Womens Budget Group \(wbg.org.uk\)](https://www.womensbudgetgroup.org.uk/news/mothers-on-the-lowest-incomes-are-nine-times-more-at-risk-of-losing-their-job-due-to-school-closures-in-the-uk)

40 [Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain](https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14860)

41 [How Are Mothers and Fathers Balancing Work and Family under Lockdown?](https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14860)

As a result, this crisis risks inhibiting the desired participation of women in paid employment and their career progression; the IMF has warned that COVID-19 threatens to roll back worldwide gains in women's economic opportunities and widen persistent gender gaps.⁴² Access to services such as nurseries, schools and social care are vital for enabling women's employment, and disabled women's employment in particular, hence any reduction in the provision of these services will have a knock-on impact on some women's ability to engage in employment.⁴³

Post-EU Exit, any roll-back in EU-derived employment protections for pregnant and part-time workers could adversely affect the capacity of pregnant women and mothers to stay in or enter the labour market.

Overall, the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the EU Exit may therefore put pressure on both the gender employment gap and the gender pay gap in coming years.⁴⁴

What are the evidence gaps?

- The full extent of the employment and income impact for women with dependent children taking time off work to look after children during school closures, given that schools continue to be closed in Scotland in order to help control the spread of the virus.
- The extent of divergence between rates of retention in work for men and women coming off furlough, given that the Job Retention Scheme remains open until April 2021, and that while take-up of the scheme is low at present (8 per cent of eligible employment for end of October 2020⁴⁵) it may rise again in future in line with increased restrictions (e.g. the January 2021 lockdown).
- The long-term effect on women's income, employment opportunities and career progression of periods out of work due to COVID-19 restrictions, and the need to look after children and/or family members.

42 [The COVID-19 Gender Gap – IMF Blog](#)

43 <https://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/resources/Gender--Economic-Recovery---Engender-andClose-the-Gap.pdf>; https://www.oecd.org/dev/development-gender/Unpaid_care_work.pdf; <https://www.gcu.ac.uk/wise/media/gcalwebv2/theuniversity/centresprojects/wise/98178%20WiSE%20BREIFING%20PAPER%204%20August.pdf>

44 See <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2019/03/fairer-scotland-women-gender-pay-gap-action-plan/documents/analytical-annex/analytical-annex/govscot%3Adocument/analytical-annex.pdf>

45 [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics: December 2020 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

What is our policy and budget response in 2021-22?

Funding to support delivery of an expansion to 1,140 hours by August 2021 presents further opportunity to enable more women to work, train or study, and help to close the gender-related pay gap. The Scottish Government's 'A Fairer Scotland for Women: Gender Pay Gap Action Plan' highlights that availability of high quality, affordable and flexible childcare is key to enabling women to fully participate in the labour market.⁴⁶ The expanded early learning and childcare (ELC) offer and the chance of more flexible provision will give more women the opportunity to return to training or work, if they choose to do so, by: improving the opportunity for women to take up work; increasing the selection of jobs they can take up; and improving their chances of career progression.

Fair Work funding takes forward and repurposes actions within our Gender Pay Gap Action Plan to reduce the pay gap in Scotland and support women in our economic recovery from the pandemic. The Women Returners Programme 2020⁴⁷ supports women who gave up work mainly due to caring or health commitments and aims to address the 'motherhood penalty' that women experience when they have taken a break following maternity. Projects provide support to women of all ages and protected characteristics to reskill, provide peer support and improve networking skills, and give up-to-date experience and access to new industries.

Flexible working practices can benefit all workers, especially older workers and those with health and caring responsibilities. Workers with caring roles are more likely to be women and a lack of flexible working opportunities can represent a more significant barrier to employment and progression for women than men. This is especially true with the move to working from home during the pandemic, as it is largely women who have to balance working from home with providing childcare or home schooling if schools are closed. Whilst developed in relation to public health advice for all workers to work from home where possible, our working from home guidance⁴⁸ provides advice and best practice for employers on how to support workers with care responsibilities to work remotely. Good quality, well paid and flexible jobs also allow women to progress in the workplace and help low income workers raise their income levels.

Together with the Hunter Foundation, through our Social Innovation Partnership, we are continuing to invest in advice to support and promote the development of flexible and family-friendly workplaces.⁴⁹ This includes offering vital advice and support to business and organisations on remote working to respond to the COVID-19 crisis.

We are also funding Timewise to support the delivery of their Fair, Flexible Work Programme for Scotland. The programme will deliver high-quality, empowering support to help 300 employers adapt to flexible working through COVID-19 and beyond. Timewise will also support the recruitment of 40 employer-facing employability advisors who will help a further 1,000 employers and 1,000 individuals to implement

46 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/fairer-scotland-women-gender-pay-gap-action-plan/>

47 <http://www.employabilityinscotland.com/participants-and-barriers/women-and-work/women-returners/>

48 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-homeworking/pages/operational-guide/#caring>

49 <https://www.flexibilityworks.org/>

and benefit from fair and flexible work opportunities. Groups such as low income parents, carers, and parents with disabled children, as well as older workers and those with health issues, will access support from 'fair flex' trained advisors which will ultimately reduce the inequalities they experience on a daily basis.

Scottish Government-funded research, managed by Zero Tolerance, investigated and developed a model for a 'What Works?' Gender Institute that would best realise the ambition of the National Advisory Council for Women and Girls. The ambition was to develop and test robust, evidence-led, inclusive and representative approaches to changing public attitudes in Scotland to girls and women's equality and rights. This includes dismantling stereotypes about what girls and women should study, work at, and be. The aim is that the Institute will be a place where good learning happens and where specialist gender support can be accessed that will give public bodies, the third sector and business the tools to act to change the culture on women's equality. The research identified three models and based on these findings Zero Tolerance have submitted their recommendations to the Scottish Government. These are currently being considered, with the next stage of work to be progressed in early 2021.

How are we working to evaluate policies and close evidence gaps?

Scottish Government regularly publishes statistics on Scotland's labour market, incomes and poverty, and data is disaggregated by gender where possible. In addition, our newly published Gender Equality Index sets a baseline against which Scotland will be able to measure its future progress towards gender equality.⁵⁰ It includes domains on Time Use, Work and Money, which will especially allow us to track changes in women's time spent on both paid and unpaid work, and their income.

The Scottish Study of Early Learning and Childcare has been designed to evaluate whether the ELC expansion in hours has achieved its objectives, by measuring outcomes for children, parents and families. This includes assessing whether the expansion has supported parents to take up employment or increase their hours of work. Baseline data was collected during 2018 and 2019 from a sample of children and parents accessing 600 hours of funded ELC. The same data will be collected from a sample of those accessing 1,140 hours, allowing for an assessment of the extent to which the expansion's long-term outcomes have been achieved.

Previous analysis of the longitudinal Understanding Society survey has examined aspects of gender and work in Scotland, including gender roles and attitudes, responsibility for domestic work, and mothers' paths to returning to employment after having a child.⁵¹ Any future analysis of the survey will further contribute to the evidence base in this area. In addition, forthcoming research aiming to improve understanding of mechanisms that revalue or result in the revaluation of women's work is being taken forward as part of Scottish Government's work to promote gender equality and reduce the gender pay gap through the Gender Pay Gap Action Plan.

⁵⁰ [Scotland's Gender Equality Index 2020 \(data.gov.scot\)](https://data.gov.scot)

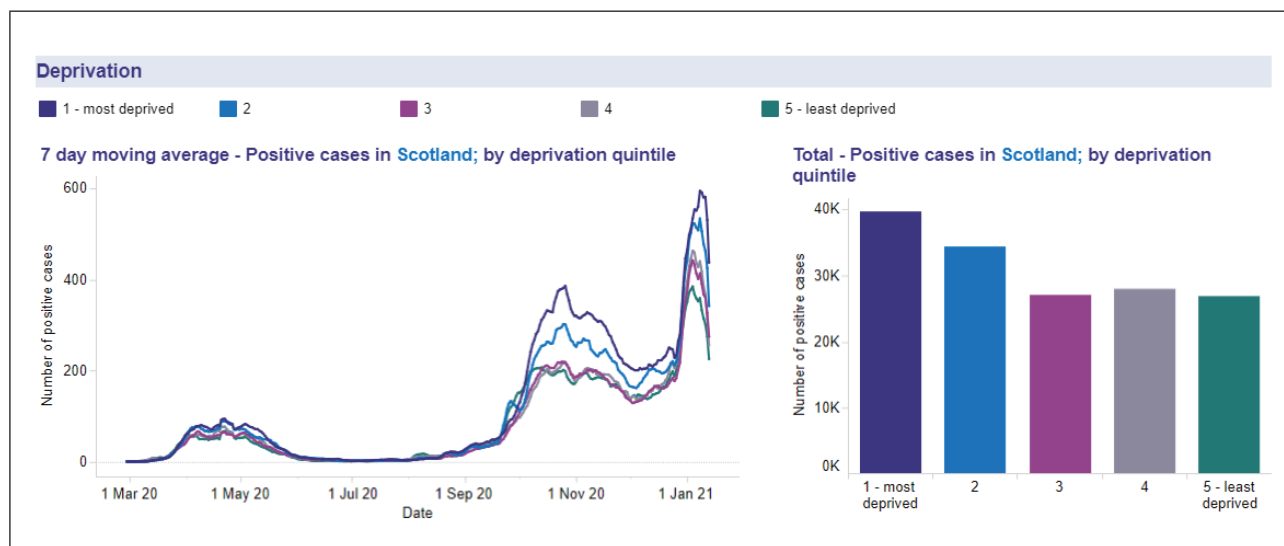
⁵¹ [Understanding Society - Gender and Work in Scotland: research findings - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)

Key Risk 4. COVID-19 Mortality and Health Inequalities

What does evidence tell us about the problem?

The two most deprived quintiles have the highest and second-highest total number of COVID-19 positive cases (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Positive Cases in Scotland by Deprivation Quintile



Source: Public Health Scotland daily dashboard (data extracted 14 January 2021).⁵²

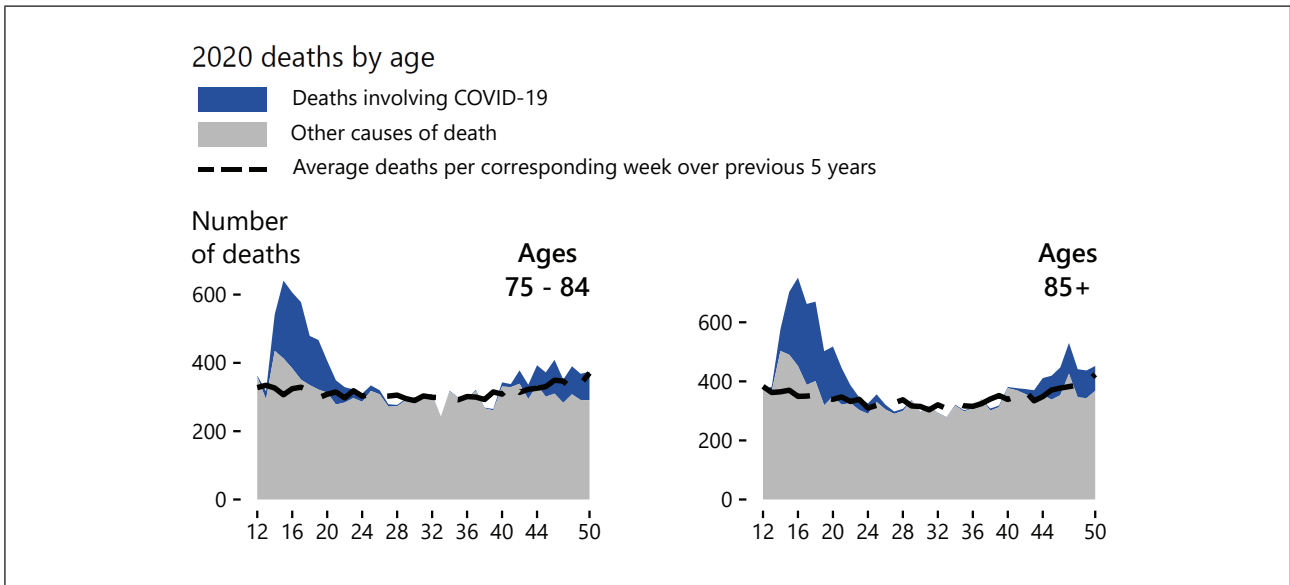
There are also differences in mortality for different groups of people within Scotland.

Age

Excess deaths are the total number of deaths registered in a week in 2020 minus the average number of deaths registered in the same week from 2015 to 2019. Most excess deaths have occurred among the older population: between weeks 12 and 50 (16 March to 13 December 2020) there were 2,521 (19 per cent) more deaths in the 85 and over age group than average. In the same period, there were 1,920 excess deaths in the 75-84 age group (16 per cent above average).

⁵² https://public.tableau.com/profile/phs.covid.19#!/vizhome/COVID-19DailyDashboard_15960160643010/Overview

Figure 5: Excess Deaths (16 March to 13 December 2020)



Source: National Records of Scotland (NRS)⁵³

Deprivation

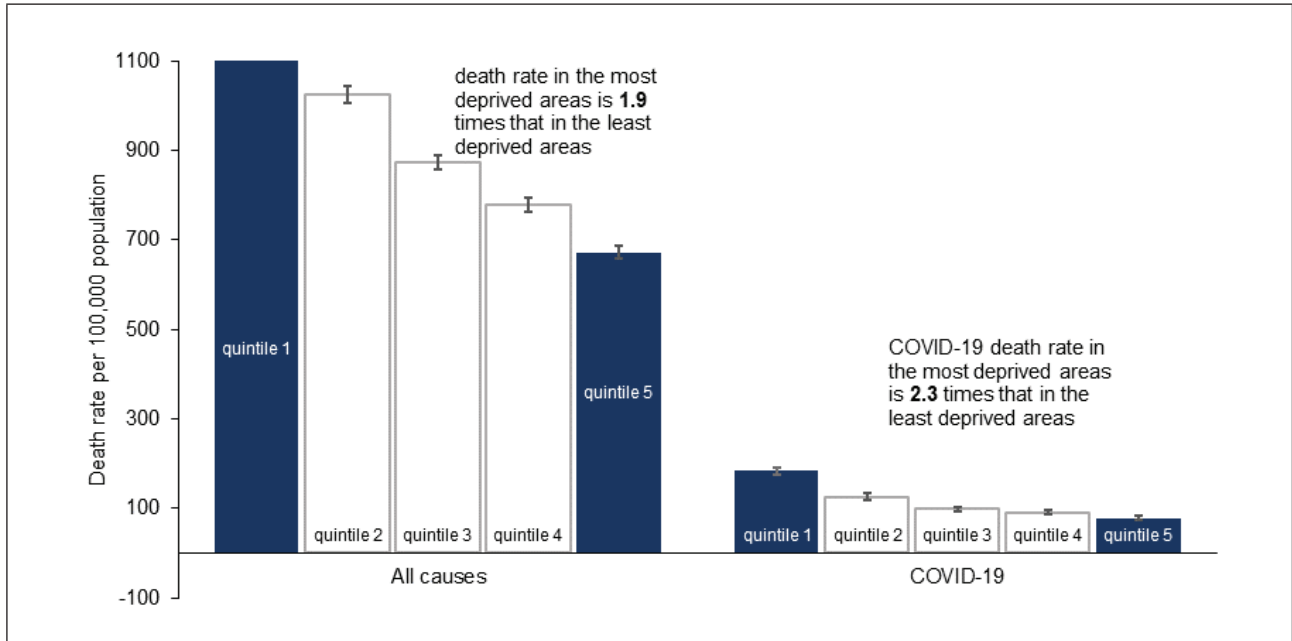
Age-standardised death rates from all causes are generally higher in the most deprived areas than in the least deprived areas. The rate in the most deprived quintile was 1.9 times the rate in the least deprived quintile between March and November 2020.

The deprivation gap is greater when looking at deaths involving COVID-19.

After adjusting for age, people living in the most deprived areas were 2.3 times as likely to die with COVID-19 as those in the least deprived areas (183 deaths per 100,000 population in the most deprived quintile compared with 79 deaths per 100,000 population in the least deprived quintile). This gap has increased in recent months.

53 <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//statistics/covid19/covid-deaths-report-week-50.pdf>

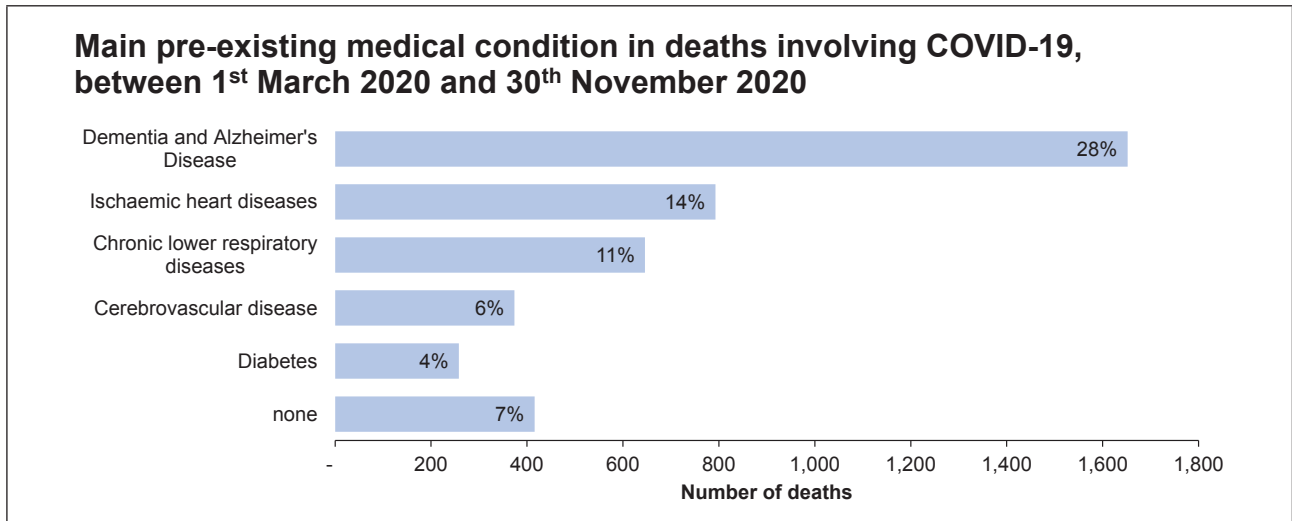
Figure 6: Age-standardised death rate by SIMD quintile, 1 March to 30 November 2020



Source: National Records of Scotland (NRS)⁵⁴

Age-standardised death rates for men were significantly higher than for women (181 compared with 122 per 100,000 people in March to November combined).

Figure 7: Pre-existing conditions in deaths involving COVID-19



Source: National Records of Scotland (NRS)⁵⁵

Of the 5,822 deaths involving COVID-19 between March and November 2020, 93 per cent (5,406) had at least one pre-existing condition. The most common main pre-existing condition was dementia and Alzheimer’s, accounting for 28 per cent of all deaths involving COVID-19, followed by ischaemic heart disease (14 per cent), chronic lower respiratory diseases (11 per cent), cerebrovascular disease (6 per cent) and diabetes (4 per cent).

54 <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//statistics/covid19/covid-deaths-report-week-50.pdf>

55 <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//statistics/covid19/covid-deaths-report-week-50.pdf>

Ethnicity

Public Health Scotland (PHS) report that there was evidence of increased risk of serious illness due to COVID-19 in those of South Asian origin, particularly in relation to those needing critical care or dying following a positive test.

South Asian ethnic groups (Pakistani, Indian and Bangladeshi) accounted for nearly 2 per cent of patients (among those that tested positive for COVID-19), similar to the proportion of the population recorded at the last census. However, PHS also note that among South Asians, the increased risk of hospitalisation or death was particularly evident among the Pakistani group, based on 94 cases.

Also, when the analysis is restricted to COVID-19 patients with the most severe outcomes, i.e. admission to a critical care unit (Intensive Care Unit or High Dependency Unit) or death, the increased rate of severe disease among the South Asian ethnic group was seen most markedly within the Pakistani ethnic group.

Public Health Scotland publish this data in regular [reports](#).⁵⁶ Detailed [tables](#) showing a breakdown of all minority ethnic groups accompany the report, and are available separately from the PHS website.⁵⁷

What are the evidence gaps?

A requirement to hold better data on ethnic groups is being addressed by recommendations made by the Expert Reference Group on COVID-19 and Ethnicity.

Work is also underway to provide more information on those with learning disabilities. The Scottish Government has commissioned the Scottish Learning Disabilities Observatory to undertake a data exercise to establish the death rate from COVID-19 among people with learning disabilities. The results of this data exercise will be published when it has been finalised, validated and peer-reviewed.

As we continue to learn and respond to the pandemic, there is emerging evidence that a significant number of people who have suffered from COVID-19 are experiencing long-term physical and mental health issues. It is crucial that the decisions we take are based on the latest available evidence and are aligned to clinical guidance. NICE and SIGN have defined 'post-COVID syndrome' or 'Long COVID' as signs and symptoms that develop during or following an infection consistent with COVID-19, which continue for more than 12 weeks and are not explained by an alternative diagnosis. It includes both "ongoing symptomatic COVID-19" (from 4 to 12 weeks) and "post-COVID-19 syndrome" (12 weeks or more). More work is needed in this area to improve our understanding of 'Long COVID'.

56 <https://beta.isdscotland.org/find-publications-and-data/population-health/covid-19/covid-19-statistical-report/2-december-2020/>

57 <https://beta.isdscotland.org/media/6736/ethnicity-tables.xlsx>

What is our policy and budget response in 2021-22?

The health budget includes £869 million of non-recurring COVID-19 consequential from HM Treasury in response to the ongoing costs of the pandemic – this covers Personal Protective Equipment, Test and Protect, reducing waiting time backlogs, and medicines and therapeutics. COVID-19 vaccinations are being provided by the UK Government on a four nation basis.

COVID-19 vaccinations

COVID-19 vaccinations will be prioritised and offered to the groups most at risk first. The order in which people will be offered the vaccine is based on advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI). These are:

- residents in a care home for older adults and their carers;
- people aged 80 and over and front line health and social care workers; and
- people aged 75 years and over.

Vaccination for other groups will begin as soon as the supply of vaccines becomes available.

Shielding

Advice and support continues to be made available to everyone on the shielding list, who are at highest risk from COVID-19, including regular communication through letters from the Chief Medical Officer, a national text messaging service, online information, and a booklet with information, advice and further helpline numbers and contacts. User testing informs our communication and support.

Ethnicity

We are committed to prioritising action to promote equality and human rights for minority ethnic communities. We are taking a cross-portfolio approach to implementing the recommendations of the Expert Reference Group on COVID-19 and Ethnicity – which we have broadly accepted.

As part of this we are working to improve ethnicity data not just to establish a fuller picture of the impacts of COVID-19, but also to allow us to better measure progress in reducing health inequalities. Our latest Programme for Government reflects our commitment, which includes making ethnicity a mandatory field for health databases and embedding ethnicity data collection in the culture of the NHS in Scotland. We are also working to ensure that Test and Protect, vaccinations and NHS remobilisation, public health messaging, and other areas specifically consider and respond to the needs of minority ethnic communities.

Testing

On 15 January 2021, the Scottish Government announced that additional Mobile Testing Units (MTUs) and a roll-out of community testing in Fife and Grampian are being introduced to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Also, testing of all care-at-home providers will increase protection for those providing care and those receiving it. This will ensure Scotland's 85,000 care at home providers have access to testing by the end of January.

Locally-led Community Testing will continue to be supported through the national MTU fleet of vehicles, which is delivered by the Scottish Ambulance Service. This fleet will grow from 18 to 42 vehicles by March 2021 and will have the capacity to reach 84 communities.

How are we working to evaluate policies and close evidence gaps?

The Scottish Government published an assessment of the impacts of COVID-19 on equality in Scotland in September 2020, and this will inform the decisions required around the recovery from COVID-19.

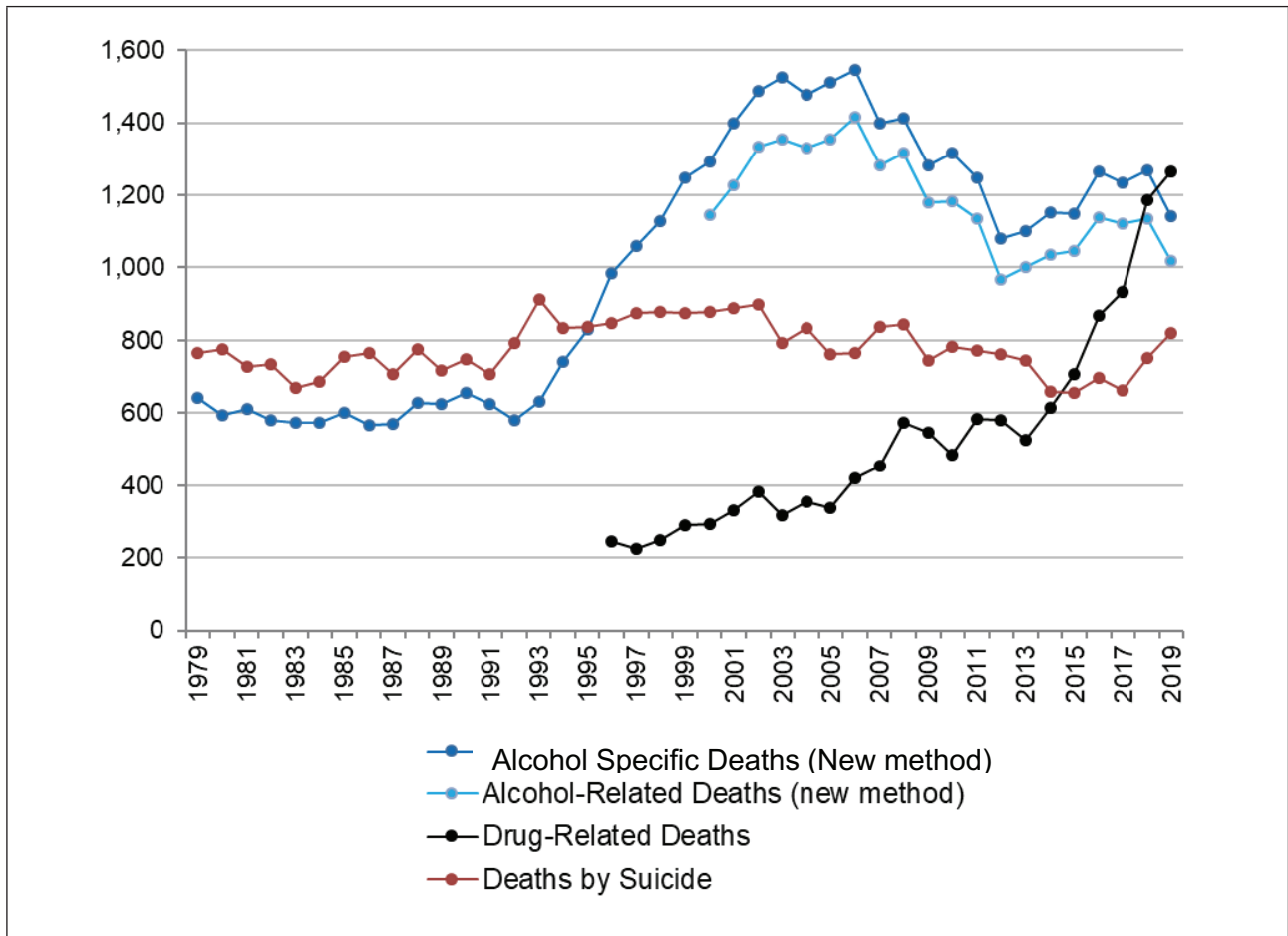
Public Health Scotland, National Records of Scotland and the Scottish Government are working together to meet the recommendations made by the Expert Reference Group on COVID-19 and Ethnicity on improving the data and evidence around ethnicity in Scotland. The Scottish Government have also created the Data and Intelligence Network (DIN) which is part of the infrastructure that has been established to capture, mobilise and support the data challenges we need to address in the pandemic across the public sector.

Work is also underway to evaluate the Scottish Government's response to various aspects of the pandemic, such as the vaccinations programme.

Key Risk 5. Drug and Alcohol Deaths Remain Unacceptably High with the Impact of COVID Unclear

What does evidence tell us about the problem?

Figure 8: Alcohol, Suicide and Drug Deaths in Scotland, 1979-2019



- As Figure 8 shows, 1,264 drug-related deaths were registered in Scotland in 2019, 6 per cent (77) more than in 2018. This was the largest number ever recorded, and more than double that of 10 years earlier (545 in 2009).
- Men accounted for the majority of the drug-related deaths in 2019 (69 per cent). However, the percentage increase in female drug-related deaths has been higher over the last decade – up by 218 per cent (i.e. over three times as many female deaths) compared with 86 per cent for men (using five-year averages to reduce the effect of year-to-year fluctuations).
- The median age of drug-related deaths has increased from 28 to 42 over the last 20 years.⁵⁸
- Although drug-related deaths of those aged 15-24 fell by about a third over the last decade (using five-year averages), the number increased in both 2018 (64 deaths) and 2019 (76 deaths).

58 <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//statistics/drug-related-deaths/2019/drug-related-deaths-19-pub.pdf>

- There were 1,020 alcohol-specific deaths registered in Scotland in 2019, 10 per cent fewer than in 2018 and the lowest annual total since 2013 (1,002).⁵⁹
- Males accounted for nearly two-thirds (65 per cent) of alcohol-specific deaths in 2019. Over the years since 1979, there have usually been at least twice as many male deaths as female deaths.
- Most alcohol-specific deaths are of people in their 50s and 60s (591, or 58 per cent of the total in 2019). Over the last five years, 55-59 was the age group with the largest number, with an average of 182 deaths per year. The average age of alcohol-specific deaths has increased over the last decade or so; it was around 55 for many years but has risen to around 59 more recently.

Scotland's deprived communities are disproportionately impacted by drug and alcohol harms. There is a clear association between poverty and deprivation and alcohol and drug use harms. Local authority areas with the highest levels of deprivation also see the highest levels of drug and alcohol deaths. A recent Scottish burden of disease study undertaken by PHS reported that drug use was one of the most striking areas of inequalities. The disease burden of drug use disorders is **17 times higher** and alcohol dependence **8.4 times higher** in the most deprived areas compared with the least deprived areas.⁶⁰

What are the evidence gaps?

Drug and alcohol use has a clear social and cultural context and there is a growing body of evidence around the distinct trends and harms experienced by different groups – such as chemsex among men who have sex with men, and IPED use (image and performance enhancing drugs) and other trends across specific cultural and religious communities. However there is little robust quantitative evidence of harms at the national level due to poor data capture on characteristics such as ethnicity and sexual orientation.

In addition, while monitoring and surveillance has been stepped up, it remains to be seen what the full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic will be on people who experience, or who are vulnerable to, harmful drug and alcohol use.

What is our policy and budget response in 2021-22?

In December 2020, Angela Constance was appointed Minister for Drugs Policy to lead the response to Scotland's unacceptable drug death rate. The new Minister will lead a new National Mission to address the drug crisis, implementing a programme of work to:

- get more people into treatment and recovery;
- get the best treatment and recovery services;
- get longer protection from continuity in care; and
- take forward immediate life-saving interventions.

59 <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//statistics/alcohol-deaths/2019/alcohol-specific-deaths-19-main-points.pdf>

60 NHS Health Scotland (2018), The Scottish Burden of Disease Study, 2016: Deprivation Report, available at: <https://www.scotpho.org.uk/media/1656/sbod2016-deprivation-report-aug18.pdf>

On 20 January 2021, the First Minister announced a major new commitment to tackling Scotland's drug death crisis. This includes significant new funding of £50 million per year for the next five years, together with new commitments around treatment and access to residential rehabilitation. A further £5 million is being allocated in this financial year to ensure work starts immediately.

Our Alcohol Framework 2018: Preventing Harm (published November 2018) contains 20 actions to tackle alcohol-related harm.⁶¹ Like the previous framework, it continues to be based on the World Health Organization's recommended approach of having affordability, availability and attractiveness at the centre of any policy to tackle alcohol harms. We will continue to take a whole-population approach which aims to reduce alcohol consumption and the risk of alcohol-related harms across the population, ensuring that two consistent threads run through all our work – our actions must reduce health inequalities, and protect children and young people.

How are we working to evaluate policies and close evidence gaps?

PHS have developed a monitoring and evaluation framework to monitor and evaluate progress against the commitments and outcomes from Rights, Respect and Recovery⁶² on an ongoing basis. This will sit alongside the existing evaluation framework for the Alcohol Harm Prevention Framework, 'Monitoring and Evaluating Scotland's Alcohol Strategy' (MESAS).⁶³

On minimum unit pricing of alcohol, we are funding a wide-ranging, independent evaluation programme which is led by PHS.⁶⁴ It involves a portfolio of research examining a number of areas including price and product range; alcohol sales and consumption; alcohol-related harm; and economic impact on the industry.

This programme will inform a report which will consider the impact of minimum unit pricing on improving public health, social and economic deprivation, and the effect on licence holders including the pub and retail sectors. The report will be considered by the Scottish Parliament, and MSPs will vote on whether to continue minimum unit pricing.

61 [Alcohol Framework 2018 – gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/alcohol-framework-2018/pages/1-introduction.aspx)

62 [Monitoring and evaluation framework for Rights, Respect and Recovery – Publications – Public Health Scotland](https://www.gov.scot/publications/monitoring-and-evaluation-framework-for-rights-respect-and-recovery/pages/1-introduction.aspx)

63 [Monitoring and Evaluating Scotland's Alcohol Strategy \(MESAS\) – Alcohol – Health topics – Public Health Scotland](https://www.gov.scot/publications/monitoring-and-evaluating-scotland-s-alcohol-strategy-mesas/pages/1-introduction.aspx)

64 [Evaluation of minimum unit pricing \(MUP\) – Alcohol – Health topics – Public Health Scotland](https://www.gov.scot/publications/evaluation-of-minimum-unit-pricing-mup/pages/1-introduction.aspx)

Key Risk 6. High and Rising Mental Health Problems Made Worse by COVID-19

What does evidence tell us about the problem?

The evidence is clear that the COVID-19 pandemic is taking its toll on the population's mental wellbeing.⁶⁵ Some groups – particularly women, young adults, those with a pre-existing mental health condition and people in lower socio-economic groups – are faring worse than others. There appears to be a widening of mental health inequalities, as the impacts of COVID-19 interact with pre-existing risk and protective factors for mental health. A combination of social and economic factors, brought about by the response to the pandemic, play a role in impacting on mental health and wellbeing. Key influences include loneliness, financial pressures, changes in social contacts, spending more time at home, changes to work and education, changes to childcare and caring, and uncertainty or lack of control.

Figure 9 presents some findings from Wave 1 of the Scottish COVID Mental Health Tracker Study.⁶⁶ Overall, a quarter of those responding reported moderate to severe depressive symptoms, and close to a fifth reported moderate to severe anxiety symptoms. Differential impacts between groups are clearly evident. Around 10 per cent of respondents also reported having had suicidal thoughts in the last week.

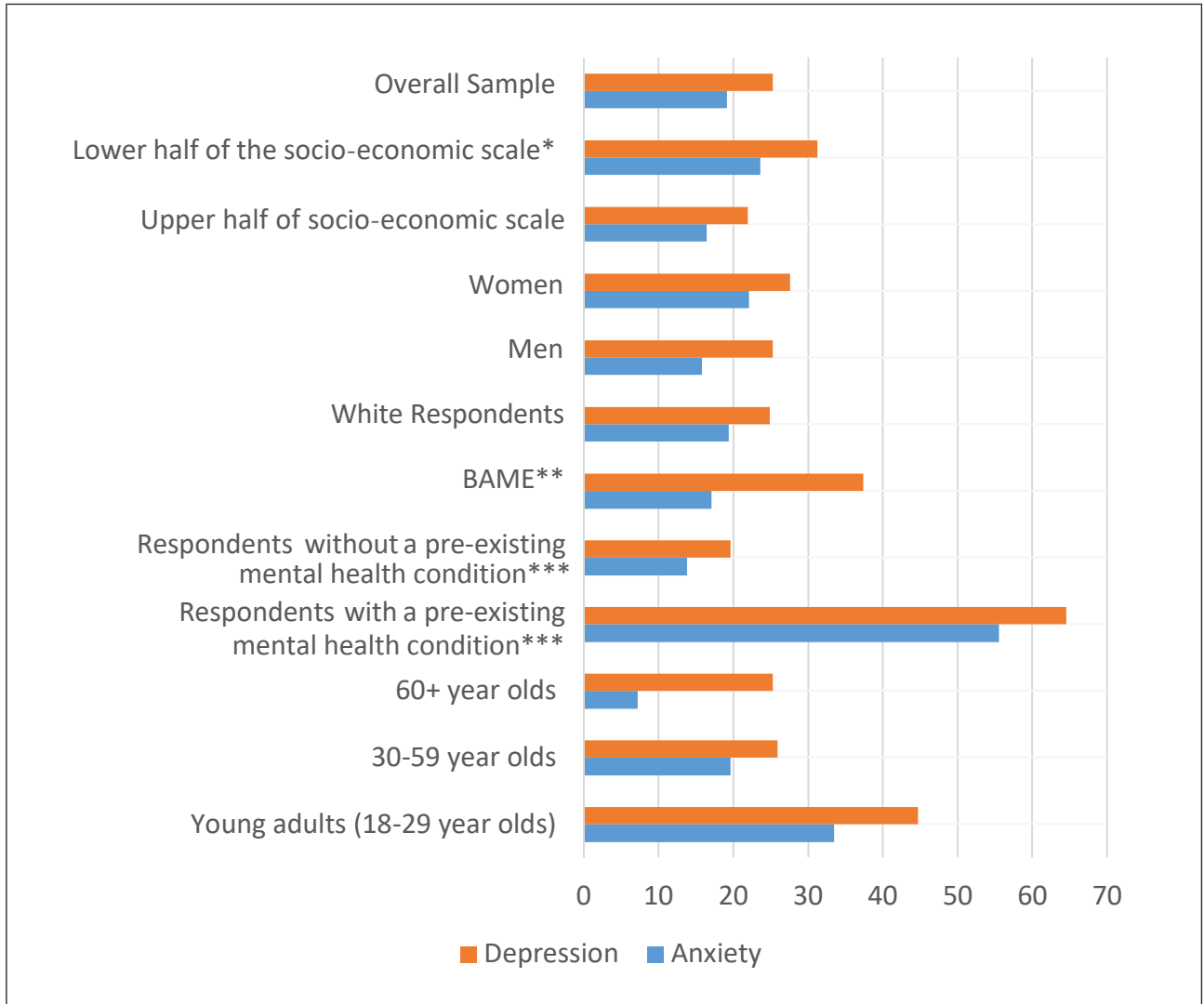
There is emerging evidence that interventions, such as social distancing, stay at home guidance and school closures, have likely had an adverse effect on the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people – although some have reported benefits for their mental health. Vulnerable children and young people, and those with challenging home environments, are more likely than others to have had experiences during the pandemic that are associated with a risk to mental health and wellbeing, such as disruptions to support. Girls, particularly older girls, and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds have worse mental wellbeing outcomes.

The impacts on mental health have implications in both the shorter and longer-term for individuals and their families, as well as for the services and support available. In the early months of the pandemic there was a fall in referrals to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), as well as a fall in the number of adults starting psychological therapies, although rates appear to be recovering.

65 Evidence comes from a number of sources, including the [Scottish COVID Mental Health Tracker Study](#); 3 evidence papers produced by the Scottish Government's [COVID-19 Mental Health Research Advisory Group](#) (published along with minutes of April, June and July meetings) and [surveillance reports from Public Health England](#). A summary of evidence on mental health impacts of COVID-19 is included in the Scottish Government's [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): mental health – transition and recovery plan](#).

66 [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): mental health tracker study – wave 1 report – gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

Figure 9: Percentage of respondents in the Scottish COVID Mental Health Tracker Study reporting moderate to severe depression or anxiety symptoms (May/June 2020)



Source: [Scottish Covid Mental Health Tracker Study: Wave 1](#)

* The lower half of the socio-economic scale was created by grouping occupational groups C2, D and E and the upper half by grouping A, B and C1. More information on the groupings is available from the Market Research Society.

** BAME refers to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic respondents, which includes those who identified as Mixed.

*** Pre-existing mental health conditions included all respondents who reported a mental health problem.

What are the evidence gaps?

The evidence indicates that COVID-19 is likely to have a significant effect on mental health in the coming years and that the impacts are likely to be unevenly distributed. However, we are as yet uncertain about the severity and longevity of these impacts across different population groups.

We need to monitor and understand emerging evidence on the mental health impacts of COVID-19 on other groups where there are known health inequalities, including people from minority ethnic backgrounds. We also need to monitor and understand emerging evidence on the longer-term impacts of having COVID-19, or caring for those who have it.

What is our policy and budget response in 2021-22?

The COVID-19 Mental Health Transition and Recovery Plan outlines the Scottish Government's response to the mental health impacts of COVID-19.⁶⁷ It addresses the challenges that the pandemic has had, and will continue to have, on the population's mental health. It lays out key areas of mental health need that have arisen as a result of COVID-19 and lockdown, and the actions that the Scottish Government will take to respond to that need. The Plan sets out actions to improve mental health outcomes at a population level, as well as to offset inequalities for specific populations that are disproportionately affected. The Plan will be funded from the £869 million COVID-19 consequentials outlined earlier.

How are we working to evaluate policies and close evidence gaps?

In April 2020, the Scottish Government established a COVID-19 Mental Health Research Advisory Group.⁶⁸ The Group's role is to review and communicate wider evidence and to inform the development of the Scottish Government's mental health response.

The Scottish Government has commissioned the SCOVID Mental Health Tracker Study, to enable a better understanding of the impacts of the pandemic on mental health and wellbeing in Scotland over a 12-month period (from May 2020).

The COVID-19 Mental Health Transition and Recovery Plan includes a number of commitments to monitor and evaluate activities that were put in place in response to the pandemic, including the national approach to Distress Brief Interventions, the NHS 24 Mental Health telephone hub, and the relationship helpline established during lockdown.⁶⁹ There are also commitments to work with stakeholders and/or the research community to develop the evidence base around specific topics of interest (e.g. impacts on relationships, impacts on older people, and impacts of complicated grief).

⁶⁷ [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): mental health – transition and recovery plan – gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/covid-19-mental-health-transition-and-recovery-plan/pages/1-1-introduction.aspx)

⁶⁸ [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Mental Health Research Advisory Group – gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/covid-19-mental-health-research-advisory-group/pages/1-1-introduction.aspx)

⁶⁹ [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): mental health – transition and recovery plan – gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/covid-19-mental-health-transition-and-recovery-plan/pages/1-1-introduction.aspx)

Key Risk 7. As Work, Public Service and Home Schooling Moved Online, It Highlighted a Real Digital Divide

What does evidence tell us about the problem?

We have seen an increased reliance on digital technologies during the COVID-19 pandemic, and that the negative consequences of being digitally excluded in the current context can be greater than ever. If anything, the COVID pandemic is likely to continue accelerating the use of digital technologies and increase reliance upon them in areas including work, healthcare and education.

Those who do not have the skills or resources to use digital technologies may therefore be at even greater risk of being left behind if these inequalities are not addressed.⁷⁰ A lack of digital access can have a negative impact on outcomes in areas including health, social isolation, finances, employment and academic performance (type of internet use may be as important as access for the latter), and the consequences of increased digital inequalities are therefore also likely to exacerbate inequalities in other areas.⁷¹

There are two main aspects to inequality in digital access: inequality of digital skills and confidence, and inequality of digital resources (physical equipment and infrastructure). Both of these will impact upon someone's ability to use digital technologies. Whether or not people have the digital resources they need will depend on both the availability of the technology and whether they can afford it. While there is often much focus on older adults being less likely to use digital technologies, digital inequalities also largely reflect wider socio-economic inequalities.⁷² We know that older adults, those with lower household incomes, adults living in the most deprived areas, and those living in social rented housing are all less likely to use the internet in Scotland.⁷³ Those with a long-standing physical or mental health condition or illness are also less likely to use the internet (although not all of these people will be disabled) and data at UK level shows that disabled people are less likely to have used the internet recently.⁷⁴ Adults of minority ethnicities (those other than white Scottish, British or Irish) are more likely than average to use the internet (indeed 97 per cent of them do, compared to 87 per cent overall).

For people who already have digital access and skills, the pandemic is creating conditions that mean they are likely to be spending more time online and using their devices, and therefore further improving their skills.⁷⁵ At the same time, many people may be obtaining digital access for the first time. Organisations supporting digital inclusion report increased numbers of people undertaking digital training since the pandemic began and research suggests that many people are trying new digital activities.⁷⁶ It is not yet clear, however, how many people are acquiring new digital skills

⁷⁰ [COVID-19 and digital inequalities: Reciprocal impacts and mitigation strategies - ScienceDirect](#)

⁷¹ https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/10491/3/A9RF934_Redacted.pdf; [LOW-RES-3999-CUKT-Switched-On-Report-ONLINE.pdf \(d1ssu070pg2v9i.cloudfront.net\)](#); https://d1ssu070pg2v9i.cloudfront.net/pex/carnegie_uk_trust/2016/09/v3-2697-CUKT-Digital-Participation-summary.pdf

⁷² <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0747563220301771>

⁷³ [Scottish household survey 2018: annual report - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

⁷⁴ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/itandinternetindustry/bulletins/internetusers/2019>

⁷⁵ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0747563220301771#cebib0010>

⁷⁶ <https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/387/pdf/>; https://www.ey.com/en_uk/tmt/top-10-challenges-and-opportunities-for-covid-19-impacted-digital-home

or who these people are. It has also been noted that there is a risk for less experienced users to misuse digital spaces and have negative experiences.⁷⁷

Around 1 in 10 adults in Great Britain who think that something in their lifestyle either has, or might have changed for the better since the coronavirus outbreak, say that they have found it easier to join in with activities because they are now online.⁷⁸ There is no significant difference between working-age and older adults, but a higher proportion of women (14 per cent of those saying something in their life had/might have changed for the better) than men (4 per cent) have found it easier to join in with activities because they are online.

But, for many people who previously had internet access outside their homes – for example in libraries, cafes or restaurants, at work and on local transport – this may no longer be available to them under lockdown.⁷⁹ As highlighted above, internet access is important for learning, working and job applications, shopping, health services, social contact, benefit applications and justice procedures, and is even more so during the pandemic. It has also been noted that for some people, lack of internet access may have prevented them from obtaining guidelines and government recommendations relating to the pandemic, as well as from shielding effectively, and made them more vulnerable to contracting the virus.⁸⁰

Ofcom, the UK's telecommunications regulator, outline in their Connected Nations 2020 report that good broadband connections are available to most people, with 94 per cent of premises in Scotland having access to a superfast broadband connection with speeds of at least 30 Megabits per second (Mbps). While the number of premises in Scotland without access to at least decent broadband of 10 Mbps continues to shrink, Ofcom estimate that around 34,000 premises in Scotland (1.2 per cent) are without a decent broadband service from either fixed or fixed wireless networks.

In relation to mobile coverage, Ofcom highlight that 81 per cent of Scotland's geographic area has access to good 4G coverage from at least one of the mobile operators, but that only 44 per cent has coverage from all four operators. This leaves around 19 per cent of Scotland without access to a 4G service from any operator.

Historically, broadband has been seen as a rural issue, however, the digital divide is more complex and income and deprivation are more closely linked. There are still speed and reliability problems in remote rural areas though, where only 11 per cent of households have superfast broadband (compared with 33 per cent of urban Scotland). Eighty-three per cent of remote rural Scotland connects by DSL broadband, compared with 56 per cent of urban Scotland. Clearly, slow or unreliable internet connections will significantly damage the possibilities for some types of online learning.

77 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0747563220301771#cebib0010>

78 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandwellbeing/bulletins/coronavirusandthesocialimpactsongreatbritain/3july2020>

79 https://d1ssu070pg2v9i.cloudfront.net/pex/carnegie_uk_trust/2019/02/21143338/LOW-RES-3999-CUKT-Switched-On-Report-ONLINE.pdf; <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0747563220301771#cebib0010>

80 <https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/387/pdf/>; <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0747563220301771#cebib0010>

What is our policy and budget response in 2021-22?

In 2017 we published 'Realising Scotland's Full Potential in a Digital World: A Digital Strategy for Scotland', which set out a vision to ensure that Scotland was recognised throughout the world as a vibrant, inclusive, greener, open, and outward-looking digital nation.

As noted above, the coronavirus pandemic makes this vision even more compelling, but the context in which it needs to be delivered has changed dramatically.

In response to this, we are producing a new digital strategy, 'Renewing Scotland's Full Potential in a Digital World', which we are aiming to publish in March 2021. We have made a conscious decision to put the individual and collective wellbeing of our country at the heart of the strategy, and we have placed digital inclusion at the front and centre in recognition of this.

This is based on feedback to the consultation exercise that closed in December 2020, which repeatedly cited that inclusion is the most essential element for the effective delivery of a digital Scotland – a truly inclusive digital Scotland has significant benefits to public service reform, flexible working, and economic growth, through people having high-speed connectivity, as well as the skills and confidence to use it.

Put simply, geography, background or ability should not be barriers to getting online and benefiting from digital technology. The strategy provides coherence to what is, out of necessity, a broad agenda by setting out a range of actions to improve inclusion.

We have committed to provide every home and business in Scotland with access to superfast broadband. This Reaching 100 per cent (R100) programme will be delivered through a combination of the R100 contracts (through which £600 million worth of public subsidy will be invested over a number years for delivery), our nationwide Scottish Broadband Voucher Scheme and commercial coverage. Our Scottish Broadband Voucher Scheme will, however, ensure that everyone can access superfast broadband by the end of 2021.

Through the Scottish 4G Infill programme, we are investing £25 million to improve rural 4G mobile coverage by delivering future-proofed, 4G infrastructure and services in up to 46 mobile 'not-spots'. The first site went live in February 2020, and delivery will continue until 2023.

As a result of the pandemic, and school buildings being physically closed for the vast majority of pupils in March 2020, the Scottish Government invested £25 million in devices and connectivity for school-aged learners. Delivered in partnership with local authorities, the programme is expected to deliver devices and/or connectivity for over 70,000 disadvantaged children and young people across Scotland. This provision will support children and young people now and onwards into the future. In addition, January 2021 saw a further £45 million distributed to councils to support remote learning. This funding can be used flexibly to purchase additional devices or connectivity, as well as additional staff or other measures of family support.

In terms of services, Scottish Government continues to invest in the national online learning environment, Glow. Glow, which is freely available to all learners and teachers in Scotland, provides free access to a range of online tools and services such as Microsoft Office 365, Google G-Suite for Education, and Wordpress Blogs.

Beyond the technology, Education Scotland has provided a significant expansion of online learning through the National e-Learning Offer. Six hundred recorded lessons and 14,000 items of online learning and teaching resources are available to schools. Education Scotland have also published clear principles and entitlements for remote learning.

Everything we do has to be carefully considered to ensure that everyone can benefit, and we achieve this using the core principles of the Scottish Approach to Service Design. And while digital is often an important means, we must not rule out the continued use of other consumer technologies that people are still comfortable using, including SMS and telephone calls. We have commissioned the Health and Social Care Alliance to undertake a public engagement process so that we can continue to develop our approach to the development of digital services. We have also formed an inclusion and equality steering group to inform our digital health and care policy development.

The Connecting Scotland programme will play an important role in ensuring that no one is left behind by the advances made with digital. But again, this is only just the start and it must be a joint endeavour across all sectors to support this important agenda.

Our Near Me video consulting platform has been scaled up and is now seeing around 20,000 video consultations per week, providing greater choice over how people can access health and care services while, importantly, the option also remains for consultations to be undertaken by phone or face-to-face. Before the pandemic, work had been underway to explore 'digital pods' that would allow for more people to be able to go to somewhere local to have their video consultation if they do not have access to a device themselves. The Near Me programme undertook significant engagement to develop a service that is person-centred and easy to use. This included an EQIA and public engagement exercise that reached over 5,000 members of the public and clinicians. The findings are published and include some interesting findings, in particular regarding perceived age bias, while it also uncovered a further unexpected barrier with regards to the need for space available in the home to hold a private consultation, which was a significant finding.⁸¹

Digital inclusion must now be at the heart of how we design and develop health and care services going forward, and we expect to see this reflected as we look to refresh our digital health and care strategy in 2021. There remain significant opportunities to speed up how quickly people can access information about their care and to address some of the issues being faced by some of most vulnerable people in society (such as those experiencing homelessness, drug users, and more).

81 [Video consultations - public and clinician views: consultation summary - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#) [Near Me video consulting programme: equality impact assessment - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

Throughout the pandemic we have seen an increase in the number of people who are accessing our online health and care services through NHS Inform, as well as an increase in digital supporting mental health services and greater self-management of conditions from home.

Our Protect Scotland app has offered us an additional tool to support contact tracing efforts and notifies users via Bluetooth technology when they may have been in close proximity with someone who has tested positive for COVID. To date, the app has been downloaded by more than 1.76 million people (33 per cent of the population). We must look to build upon the momentum we have seen for people accessing services through digital.

Furthermore, we committed early in the pandemic to an action plan for digital in care homes, to provide them with greater digital capabilities and to respond to some of the challenges being faced. As part of the action plan, we committed £1 million toward providing our care homes and their residents with digital devices, connectivity and skills in collaboration with the Connecting Scotland programme. However, this should never replace face-to-face or human interaction, which remain vital.

To date, we have given 565 care homes devices that can support up to 22,000 care home residents to remain in contact with family or friends or to have a medical or care consultation. Priority has been given to the care homes who had either no current devices or issues with connectivity.

How are we working to evaluate policies and close evidence gaps?

As part of the digital strategy update, we are currently mapping out actions to existing work programmes. This will allow us to understand what governance and resourcing is in place and what the possible delivery mechanisms are. This will, in turn, feed into the work that we have just commissioned to put in place a measurements and benefits regime for the strategy. Our aim is to have an outline measurement and benefits framework ready by the time we publish the strategy.

Key Risk 8. Risk that Economic Impacts and Decisions about Universal Credit Could Increase Poverty, and Particularly Child Poverty

What does evidence tell us about the problem?

Before the pandemic, 19 per cent of people and 24 per cent of children were living in relative poverty after housing costs (2016-19).⁸² Current evidence on job losses⁸³, reduction in hours and increased numbers claiming Universal Credit⁸⁴ suggests that household incomes and living standards will have decreased for many during 2020.

It is not yet clear how this will affect the headline poverty measures, and the new Scottish Child Payment is mitigating some of the impact for families with children. However, there remains a risk that without significant additional intervention, incomes and living standards will decrease further.

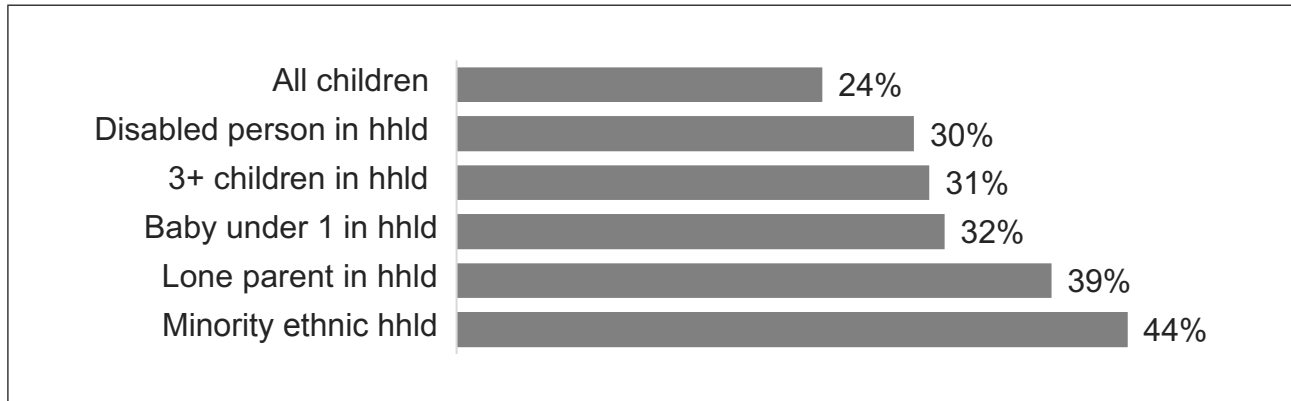
82 [Poverty & Income Inequality in Scotland: 2016-19 \(infographic\) \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

83 [Labour market overview, UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

84 [Out of work benefits - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

We know that some families were more likely to be in poverty before the pandemic, and we also know that these same groups (young people, women, disabled people and people of minority ethnicities) are more likely to have been hit by the economic impact of COVID-19,⁸⁵ risking them falling behind even further. Low earners were more likely than high earners to lose their jobs or be furloughed as a result of the pandemic.⁸⁶

Figure 10: Proportion of Children in Relative Poverty after Housing Costs, Scotland, 2016-19



Source: Scottish Government analysis of Family Resources Survey data

The workers likely to be worst affected by the lockdown also had less wealth to fall back on in hard times. Before the pandemic, a third of all households, and over half of households on the lowest incomes, were financially vulnerable, meaning that they did not have enough savings to cover basic living costs for three months. The groups most likely to be financially vulnerable included lone parent families (most of which are headed by women), other families with children, and young adult households.⁸⁷

The pandemic has had very different impacts on the savings and debt of those on low and high incomes. High income families are more likely have experienced falling outgoings, whereas low income families are more likely to have seen the amount they save each month fall during the lockdown, and to have taken on extra debt.⁸⁸

The report of the Social Renewal Advisory Board, published in January 2021, built on the views of experts with lived experience, and provided further evidence of the harm being experienced by low income families during the pandemic.

According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF), the contribution of housing costs has been significant in keeping child poverty levels in Scotland lower than in the UK as a whole.⁸⁹

85 [Covid+and+Inequalities+Final+Report+For+Publication+--+PDF.pdf \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

86 [Covid+and+Inequalities+Final+Report+For+Publication+--+PDF.pdf \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

87 [Wealth in Scotland 2006-2018 \(data.gov.scot\)](#)

88 [Rainy-Days.pdf \(resolutionfoundation.org\)](#)

89 [Poverty in Scotland 2019 | JRF](#)

What are the evidence gaps?

The official data source for poverty is the Family Resources Survey (FRS). It will be March 2022 before we fully understand poverty levels during the period March 2020 to March 2021. Even then, it will be difficult to identify how much of any evidenced change is due to the COVID-19 pandemic compared to the impacts of EU Exit on the economy, and funding decisions made by the UK Government in relation to reserved issues, such as whether, and for how long, the £20 uplift to Universal Credit is retained. The FRS provides a good range of poverty data, but it cannot provide full details for small sub-groups of the population.

Tackling child poverty is complex, requiring investment in many different levers. Evaluation of individual policies is important, but it is also important to understand how these policies fit together in theory and in practice.

What is our policy and budget response in 2021-22?

Tackling poverty and inequality is a key priority for this government and underpins our wider ambitions for a fairer and more prosperous Scotland. Poverty is a strong driver of wider inequalities, impacting not only people's life chances, but also their healthy life expectancy. Wider inequalities, including the likes of the gender pay gap, disability and ethnicity employment gaps, and the attainment gap for socio-economically disadvantaged young people, drive poverty, and so effectively tackling and reducing poverty requires focused action from across government portfolios as well as from the wider public, private and third sectors. Our first delivery plan to tackle child poverty set out that there are three key drivers to tackle child poverty: increasing income from employment; increasing income from social security; and reducing costs of living. Approaches to tackle the emerging risks around employment have been discussed in key risks 1 and 2, with key risk 3 considering issues for women, many of whom will be parents, including lone parents.

As outlined within the most recent child poverty progress report, investment targeted to support households on low incomes reached almost £2 billion in 2019-20.⁹⁰ This includes £672 million of spend targeted to support the children living in those households. These estimates do not include the universal services, present within the social contract for every citizen, that we all benefit from – including free tuition and free prescriptions.

Social Security is a key responsibility for the Scottish Government. It is an investment in the people of Scotland and provides clear value for money for the public purse. With dignity, fairness and respect at its heart, we are supporting low income families, young people entering employment, and carers, as well as delivering the ground-breaking new Scottish Child Payment for children under six. The latest spending forecast from the Scottish Fiscal Commission projects that spending on the Scottish Child Payment will increase from around £9 million in 2020-21 to £68 million in 2021-22. This flagship commitment has been described as a 'game-changer' in the fight against child poverty by anti-poverty campaigners, but it is just one element of the Scottish Government's anti-poverty strategy.

⁹⁰ Scottish Government, [Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan – second year progress report](#), August 2020

Forecast spending for Scottish Child Payment

£ million	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Total	9	68	105	184	183	182

To effectively tackle poverty, we are also taking action to reduce household costs, through the likes of affordable housing, reducing heating costs through energy efficiency measures, and comprehensive advice services. Alongside this we are also taking action to mitigate the impacts of poverty on children and young people, ensuring that they grow up to meet their full potential.

Therefore we have also committed continued investment in: affordable housing supply, with £2.8 billion of planned capital investment over five years set out in our draft Infrastructure Investment Plan; over £1 billion since 2009 to tackle fuel poverty and improve energy efficiency; the continued expansion of funded early learning and childcare to 1,140 hours; tackling the digital divide (see key risk 7); and in extending Fair Start Scotland, our employment support service, by a further two years to March 2023 (see key risk 1).

Investment will also continue to be made through the £50 million Tackling Child Poverty Fund, making further resource available for the innovative Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland programme, which takes a place-based approach to improving outcomes for children, young people and their communities, and for the £3 million Access to Childcare Fund, which supports childcare solutions that enable more accessible and affordable childcare for families. In addition, investment will continue to be made in the Parental Employability Support Fund delivered by local authorities. This investment is supporting holistic advice for parents, helping them to progress towards employment and, for those already in work, helping them to increase their take-home earnings.

In recognition of the significant impact COVID-19 has had on household incomes, Scottish Ministers have confirmed that Free School Meal provision will continue for eligible children during the 2021 Easter holidays. £4.29 million will be made available to local authorities to continue this support, for an estimated 156,000 children and young people. The Scottish Government continue to promote a cash-first approach to food insecurity and Free School Meal alternative provision, giving families control and enabling them to make their own judgements.

How are we working to evaluate policies and close evidence gaps?

An evaluation strategy was established for the child poverty delivery plan in 2019. This includes annual monitoring of the targets, a child poverty measurement framework to monitor the drivers of child poverty, and evaluation of policies that contribute to tackling child poverty, such as Fair Start Scotland and early learning and childcare.⁹¹ We plan to carry out analysis that will help us to understand the scale of change in the drivers of child poverty that would be required to meet the targets, taking into account the impacts of COVID.

⁹¹ [Tackling child poverty: first year progress report \(2018 to 2019\) - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#) and [Tackling child poverty: second year progress report \(2019-2020\) - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

Our second Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan, to be published in March 2022, will continue to build our analysis and understanding, and outline the action we will take across 2022-26 to deliver further progress on our ambition to eradicate child poverty.

The budget for 2021-22 includes £250,000 funding from the Social Security and Older People portfolio for an additional boost of the Family Resources Survey to allow for more breakdowns of income and poverty statistics. This is in addition to the existing boost funded from the Communities and Local Government portfolio, which doubles the Scottish sample.

Key Risk 9. Risk that Gaps in Attainment and Skills Levels Will Have Been Made Worse by Periods of Blended and Virtual Learning

What does evidence tell us about the problem?

While positive progress has been made with raising national attainment levels, we know that socio-economic disadvantage remains a key driver of poorer educational attainment. A socio-economic gap in cognitive and behavioural development is apparent before children attend school, and gaps in educational attainment persist throughout the school years and beyond. Children and young people's learning experiences changed dramatically during the pandemic, and developing evidence suggest that the impacts of this have been greater for already disadvantaged groups.

The emerging evidence suggests that childcare and school building closures during the COVID-19 pandemic have affected children from low income families and children in vulnerable situations more severely than others. Key areas of concern for low income families included increasing levels of poverty, food insecurity, utility payments and fuel poverty, digital divide issues, and family and child wellbeing. Home schooling was reportedly experienced by some 8-14 year olds in Scotland as an alternative with potential benefits, while others reported less choice, fun or pride in their work and increased boredom with home schooling.⁹²

Pupils from poorer backgrounds are more likely to have had a less positive experience of remote learning during the periods when school buildings are closed. There are also considerable differences highlighted in access to resources to support home learning – such as electronic devices, internet access, a quiet space to study and parental guidance – in relation to pupils from more and less advantaged backgrounds.⁹³ There have been additional barriers to home learning where English is an additional language or where children have additional needs.⁹⁴

92 <https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/children-and-coronavirus/>

93 <https://cpag.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/report/cost-learning-lockdown-family-experiences-school-closures;> [https://www.gov.scot/publications/impact-assessment-closure-reopening-schools-part-covid-19-recovery-process-scotland-version-2/;](https://www.gov.scot/publications/impact-assessment-closure-reopening-schools-part-covid-19-recovery-process-scotland-version-2/) <https://www.gov.scot/publications/equity-audit-deepening-understanding-impact-covid-19-school-building-closures-children-socio-economically-disadvantaged-backgrounds-setting-clear-areas-focus-accelerating-recovery/>

94 <https://cypcs.org.uk/wpcypcs/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/CRIA-appendix-education.pdf>

As a result of COVID-19 restrictions, young people who are students have had their skills, learning and development disrupted, which poses challenges for attainment, career progression, and longer-term participation in education employment or training. Many sectors that are active employers of apprentices were necessarily placed into lockdown and are now experiencing the consequences of these measures. Recruitment decisions were paused or stopped altogether while restrictions on workplaces and the Job Retention Scheme remained in place.

For example, as of November 2020, the number of Modern Apprenticeship (MA) starts was 3,633 – this is a decrease of 10,086 compared to figures published in November 2019, when the number of MA starts was 13,719.⁹⁵ This decrease represents the end of a trend since 2014 of increasing numbers of MA starts. The largest decrease in MA starts was in the 16-19 age group, followed by the 20-24 age group. Whilst there was also a large decrease in MA starts in the 25 and over age group, this decrease was smaller than for younger age groups. The ongoing restrictions and uncertainty in the labour market means that the number of MA starts continues to be severely impacted as many employers have, understandably, focused on immediate issues including business survival, rather than recruitment or upskilling of staff. Extension of the Job Retention Scheme has also led to employers further delaying recruitment decisions.⁹⁶

Those young people leaving school or graduating from university during the pandemic are likely to be affected especially badly by its economic impacts. Young people have historically been hardest hit by recessions and the longer-term consequences of these. They are typically the first to lose jobs, are less likely to be recruited into new jobs, and experience a ‘scarring effect’ – an acute long-term pay squeeze over a number of years following an economic shock.⁹⁷ Young people with degree-level qualifications are not exempt from this ‘scarring effect’.

As with many socio-economic impacts of COVID-19, existing inequalities in attainment are at risk of being exacerbated. For example, in 2018-19, young people with care experience were more likely to withdraw from, or partially complete, college courses:⁹⁸ 41 per cent did not successfully complete their course, compared to an average of 31 per cent.⁹⁹

The proportion of students who have reported poor mental health and wellbeing, and low life satisfaction, has increased since the start of the pandemic.¹⁰⁰ Increases in unemployment and household debt will have shaped considerations for domestic students of whether to seek or take up university places, particularly students from more deprived backgrounds.¹⁰¹ Three in five UK students surveyed by the National Union of Students (NUS) stated that COVID-19 had some degree of impact on their

95 Skills Development Scotland, [Modern Apprenticeship Statistics Quarter 2 2019/20](#)

96 Skills Development Scotland will publish Modern Apprenticeship statistics under official statistics protocols with the year-end statistics (Quarter 4 2020/21) in June 2021. This will include reporting on equality groups.

97 <https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14821>

98 College courses lasting 160 hours or more.

99 Scottish Funding Council, [College Performance Indicators 2018/19 Executive Summary](#)

100 [Coronavirus and higher education students – Office for National Statistics](#)

101 <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/covid-19-impacts-university-access/>

income, with a quarter reporting a major impact.¹⁰² Almost half of students surveyed by NUS Scotland last year cited lack of money or financial pressures as negatively impacting on their mental health. This has been further exacerbated by COVID-19.¹⁰³

Nearly all lecturers reported barriers for their students engaging in remote learning, while the NUS survey in July found that among students with online learning provided by their institution, 67 per cent were able to access this sufficiently to complete their studies and 55 per cent agreed the online provision was of good standard or quality.¹⁰⁴ The Disabled Students Commission have highlighted the potential benefit to students with fluctuating health conditions of online learning happening at different times, but that there remains a need for accessibility to be standard across all learning platforms.¹⁰⁵

What are the evidence gaps?

In terms of Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels (ACEL) for primary and secondary pupils, the latest data we have is from 2018-19. While the schools were closed, it was impossible to gather the 2019-20 ACEL data in the normal way, and Scottish Government decided that the collection of ACEL data for 2019-20 should not go ahead.¹⁰⁶ In terms of attainment and retention figures for colleges and universities, the latest data we have is from 2018-19. The 2019-20 HESA data – which would cover university qualifiers last year – is being released this January, and the college data is not scheduled until March.

We are unclear on the full impact that COVID-19 has had on Community Learning and Development (CLD), and in particular on community-based adult learning and youth work. While we are aware that some of these services have been able to move provision online, the extent to which this has impacted engagement and achievement levels is not yet known. As CLD learners are primarily those experiencing barriers to involvement in more formal educational settings, it is likely that the impact has affected them disproportionately. In developing policy responses, this will have to be assessed.

The evidence reviewed for the Equity Audit conducted recently highlights the potential depth of some of these impacts, some of which may not become fully visible for some time. There will possibly be longer-term impacts on the economy and the labour market – exacerbated by EU Exit – which risk deepening existing inequality and the financial strain on families.

102 <https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/covid-19-and-students-survey-report-phase-2-public-version>; <https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/coronavirus-and-students-phase-3-study-mental-health-with-demographics-nov-2020>

103 <https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/articles/landmark-research-on-students-mental-health>

104 <https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/covid-19-and-students-survey-report-phase-2-public-version>

105 <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/three-months-make-difference>

106 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/2021-national-improvement-framework-improvement-plan/>

What is our policy and budget response in 2021-22?

The Scottish Government published an Equity Audit on the impact of school building closures on the most socio-economically disadvantaged children and families. It affirms these issues and acknowledges that full impact of the pandemic on children and families – and more widely on the economy and labour market – may not yet be fully visible.¹⁰⁷ The Equity Audit and impact assessments we have undertaken also highlight the range of effective measures taken to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and school buildings closures.¹⁰⁸

The Scottish Attainment Challenge will be a key factor in mitigating this risk. The government is therefore continuing to invest in the Scottish Attainment Challenge, with £182 million per year, including over £120 million in Pupil Equity Funding to be distributed to 97 per cent of schools in 2021-22. In July we announced £135 million of additional investment to support our teachers and schools. This investment also includes up to £50 million to help local authorities cover the additional costs associated with reopening schools. A further £45 million was announced in January to support local authorities to recruit additional staff and provide additional support for remote learning.

As described in key risk 7, as a result of the pandemic and of school buildings being physically closed for the vast majority of pupils in March 2020, the Scottish Government invested £25 million in devices and connectivity for school-aged learners. Delivered in partnership with local authorities, the programme is expected to deliver devices and/or connectivity for over 70,000 disadvantaged children and young people across Scotland. In addition, the further £45 million announced in January to support remote learning can be used flexibly by councils to purchase additional devices and connectivity solutions, as well as additional staff or other measures of family support.

In terms of services, Scottish Government continues to invest in online learning through Glow. Glow, which is freely available to all learners and teachers in Scotland, provides free access to a range of online tools and services such as Microsoft Office 365, Google G-Suite for Education, and Wordpress Blogs. Beyond the technology, Education Scotland has provided a significant expansion of online learning through the National e-Learning Offer: 600 recorded lessons and 14,000 items of online learning and teaching resources are available to schools. Education Scotland have also published clear principles and entitlements for remote learning. HM Inspectors of Education are carrying out a programme to review the quality and effectiveness of remote learning across Scotland.

In addition to our existing education, employability and skills support for young people we also provided additional funding for the Young Person's Guarantee, employability and skills. This will build on last year's investment, which provided additional college places, new pathways to apprenticeship, specialist pre-employment support to vulnerable 16-17 year olds, and 300 new school co-ordinator roles to build the capacity of Developing the Young Workforce. The additional funding into the Young Person's Guarantee, employability and skills will underpin a cross-government approach

107 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/equity-audit-deepening-understanding-impact-covid-19-school-building-closures-children-socio-economically-disadvantaged-backgrounds-setting-clear-areas-focus-accelerating-recovery/>

108 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/impact-assessment-closure-reopening-schools-part-covid-19-recovery-process-scotland-version-2/>

to support our longer-term aims of ensuring that education and skills programmes delivered through the Guarantee prepare our young people for jobs that contribute to our future economic priorities for Scotland, and directly improve outcomes for those young people who have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. Investment in Scotland's colleges through the Young Person's Guarantee in 2020-21 included additional funding to Student Awards Agency Scotland to enable students who commence training in this current financial year to complete their studies to the end of the academic year. The further investment in the Guarantee will continue to build upon this.

Through funding of £230 million to Skills Development Scotland (SDS), we continue to ensure apprenticeship opportunities are open to all. SDS's budget also includes funding to supplement commitments in the Economy, Fair Work and Culture portfolio to continue the National Transition Training Fund (NTTF) into 2021-22. NTTF was set up to support individuals who have been made unemployed or who are at risk of redundancy as a result of COVID-19 to retrain towards jobs where there is projected to be demand. The Flexible Workforce Development Fund (jointly funded by the Education and Skills and Economy, Fair Work and Culture portfolios) provides opportunities for upskilling the existing workforce for Scotland's UK Apprenticeship levy-paying employers.

In relation to higher education, the ongoing Widening Access programme was developed in response to the long-standing underrepresentation of people from the most deprived communities (SIMD20) at universities. The Higher Education Student Support budget provides bursaries and access to student loans and free tuition for all eligible Scottish undergraduate students studying in Scotland, in order to support young people and adult learners to access educational opportunities and support entry to future employment. Free tuition benefits over 120,000 undergraduates each year studying in Scotland, contributing to the delivery of fair access. The bursary and grants budget helps to support specific groups, including providing a minimum income guarantee of £7,750 per year in bursaries and loans to support students from the lowest income households. Additional support is made available for care-experienced and disabled students, and childcare support for student parents.

We have responded to student hardship during the pandemic with emergency funding of £5 million provided in April 2020; brought forward the release of £11.4 million of Higher Education discretionary funds to support students over the summer months; and provided a further £5 million in additional hardship support in January 2021. To help address the mental health and wellbeing challenges faced by students we invested a further £3.645 million for 2020-21 as part of our ongoing 2018 Programme for Government commitment to provide more than 80 additional counsellors in Further and Higher Education over four years; confirmed an extra £1.32 million in this financial year so students across Scotland will have access to more support to help them deal with the mental health impacts of the pandemic; and provided additional funding of £750,000 in this financial year to support NUS Scotland and student associations with vital welfare support for students in colleges and universities.

Although development of the national youth work and adult learning strategies was paused throughout much of 2020, work has now resumed. In developing these strategies, the impact of COVID-19 on of Community Learning and Development (CLD) learners and providers will be explored, and consideration given to the role of CLD in recovery and renewal.

We recognise that not all students have the equipment and digital access they need to study remotely, so to help address these obstacles to online engagement, the Scottish Funding Council distributed £5 million of additional funding to help support learners facing digital hardship in colleges, universities and community settings.

How are we working to evaluate policies and close evidence gaps?

The ongoing Attainment Scotland Fund (ASF) Evaluation aims to provide learning about the overall implementation of the fund and the extent to which the aims of the fund have been met.¹⁰⁹ The evaluation gathers data from a broad range of sources, including administrative data, Challenge Authority and Schools Programme Reports, surveys (of local authorities and headteachers), qualitative research, and quantitative monitoring data. Following on from adaptations to the Scottish Attainment Challenge logic model we revised our ASF evaluation questions to take account of COVID-19 school building closures and home learning. As such, the Local Authority Survey and Headteacher Survey (key survey instruments) ask direct questions about the period of school building closures – for example whether additional pupils and families have the needed school support (closing the poverty-related attainment gap), and increased evidence of new collaborations.

As described in key risk 2, our commitment to producing a measurement and evaluation plan for the Young Person’s Guarantee is set out in the activity plan, published on 5 November 2020.¹¹⁰

Key Risk 10. Evidence of Rising Levels of Domestic Abuse and Reporting of Sexual Abuse Crimes against Women and Children as Well as Risk of Rising Hate Crime Due to COVID and EU Withdrawal

What does evidence tell us about the problem?

The 2018-19 Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS) estimates that most adults (87.6 per cent) were not victims of any crime. However, despite a large reduction in overall crime in Scotland over the years, victimisation rates continued to vary among the population. For example, the likelihood of experiencing any crime was higher among those living in the 15 per cent most deprived areas and urban areas of Scotland, and lower for those aged 60 and over. Experience of partner abuse also varied among the population, with women, younger people (16-24) and those living in more deprived areas all more likely to experience domestic abuse.¹¹¹

109 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/evaluation-strategy-attainment-scotland-fund-years-3-4/pages/2/>; <https://www.gov.scot/publications/evaluation-attainment-scotland-fund-third-interim-report-year-4/>

110 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/young-persons-guarantee-phase-1-activity-plan/>

111 https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-crime-justice-survey-2017-18-main-findings/pages/13/#_9.3_Partner_Abuse

Domestic abuse and reporting of sexual abuse crimes against women and children

The number of domestic abuse incidents recorded by police across April to November 2020 was higher than the equivalent period in 2019 (up 6 per cent).¹¹² The vast majority of police-recorded domestic abuse incidents have a female victim and male perpetrator.¹¹³

Qualitative research on the impact of the pandemic on people experiencing domestic abuse or other forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG)¹¹⁴ suggested that referral rates reduced significantly during the initial weeks of lockdown, and then gradually increased during later stages and throughout Phases 1 to 3 of Scotland's Route Map through and out of the crisis.¹¹⁵ Throughout Phases 1 to 3, all VAWG services in the sample consistently reported victims experiencing significant mental ill health due to the impact of COVID-19. Victims cited the combined impact of isolation, lack of safe childcare options, managing the risk of domestic abuse and the risk of the virus to have a severe impact on their mental health and resilience. There is evidence that suggests that the incidence of both domestic abuse and child abuse can rise during economic recessions, which could further extend the negative health impacts for women and children noted above.¹¹⁶

Services received reports of children being exposed to increased levels of domestic abuse consistent with the period of lockdown. This was due to prolonged contact with perpetrators when children were not returned to the non-abusive parent after contact; perpetrators' drug and alcohol abuse in the presence of children; and the impact of the perpetrator's psychological abuse and monitoring behaviours on the non-abusive parent and their parenting capacity.¹¹⁷ Services for children and young people reported that this has had a significant impact on children's mental health and wellbeing. Many services reported that, because children did not have access to safe spaces or other trusted adults, there were fewer opportunities for them to report and receive support during lockdown and Phases 1 and 2. Most services communicated that remote engagement with younger children, particularly those aged eight and under, was very difficult. A number of specialist children's organisations communicated significant concerns for the generation of children who had experienced domestic abuse but were currently missing out on recovery work. In the period directly after children returned to school, specialist domestic abuse recovery services and children's court advocacy services experienced significant challenges in negotiating access to school buildings due to the coronavirus restrictions.

We know that for a range of reasons many crimes do not get reported to the police, and this was the case long before the pandemic struck. For example, the SCJS suggests

112 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-justice-analytical-services-data-report-november-2020/>

113 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/domestic-abuse-scotland-2018-2019-statistics/>

114 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-domestic-abuse-forms-violence-against-women-girls-during-phases-1-2-3-scotlands-route-map-22-11-august-2020/>

115 <https://www.gov.scot/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-scotlands-route-map/>

116 <https://capmh.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13034-020-00329-3>; Schneider, Harknett & McLanahan, 2016. Intimate Partner Violence in the Great Recession. *Demography*, 53: 471-505 ; <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5408954/>; <https://www.bmj.com/content/bmj/369/bmj.m1557.full.pdf>

117 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-domestic-abuse-forms-violence-against-women-girls-during-phases-1-2-3-scotlands-route-map-22-11-august-2020/>

that around 36 per cent of violent and property-based crime was reported in 2018-19, a figure that has remained similar since 2008-09.¹¹⁸ The latest SCJS results for sexual victimisation also suggest that around 23 per cent of those who experienced forced sexual intercourse since the age of 16 reported the most recent (or only) incident to the police.¹¹⁹

Looking specifically at police-recorded crime and the period covering the pandemic, the Scottish Government introduced a monthly series of Official Statistics earlier in the year to provide users with this information.¹²⁰ Whilst the specific age of victims cannot generally be determined from the data supplied by Police Scotland, many of the sexual crime codes used to record cases identify where the victim was aged under 18. By adding up all these crime codes, we know that at least 609 sexual crimes recorded during the first full quarter of lockdown (April-June 2020) had a victim under the age of 18. This was 38 per cent lower than the equivalent figure of 985 during April to June 2019, suggesting that there was a significant reduction in these types of crime being reported over lockdown. However, it is worth noting that over the following quarter, figures returned to levels much more in line with the previous year (down 3 per cent from 813 crimes in July to September 2019, to 789 in July to September 2020). Looking at this in more detail, there will likely be a range of factors that affect the volume of crime being reported to the police, and we would expect the impact of the pandemic to vary depending on the specific nature of any crime.¹²¹

Hate Crime

Racially aggravated crimes are the most commonly reported hate crime, although many hate crimes will not be reported to police.¹²²

In the period from April to June 2020, the number of hate crimes reported in Scotland was 5 per cent higher than at the same time the previous year, with the increase showing from mid-May. A significant number of these related to neighbour disputes, which may reflect increased pressures associated with lockdown and the pandemic, although the police have also suggested other possible factors responsible for this rise, such as the protests and counter-demonstrations over the Black Lives Matter movement that occurred during the same period.¹²³

118 <https://www.gov.scot/collections/scottish-crime-and-justice-survey/>

119 Whilst the SCJS does not provide information on recent victims of Child Sexual Abuse, the equivalent survey in England and Wales found in 2018-19 that less than one quarter of people who experienced such crimes reported them to the police. It would seem reasonable to assume that a similar position might pertain in Scotland, though this is a profoundly sensitive area where there are many barriers to accurate data collection - including a lack of recognition by some children and young people that they are being sexually abused, as well as challenging and ethical questions around the collection of this data.

120 <https://www.gov.scot/collections/recorded-crime-in-scotland/>

121 For example, further examination of the Official Statistics show that one contributor to the overall fall in April to June 2020 was a 43 per cent reduction in recorded crimes of lewd and libidinous practices (from 316 to 181). These cases all had child victims and must have occurred before December 2010, given the legislation used by police to record them. As such, it seems likely there has been at least a temporary fall in reports of historical CSA during the pandemic. In contrast, there has been a different impact in terms of cyber-enabled crimes, with Police Scotland highlighting in a recent paper to the Scottish Police Authority that online crimes of CSA were 21 per cent higher in April to June 2020 compared to the same period in 2019. See <https://www.spa.police.uk/spa-media/fxsem1bg/item-2-1-graphics-version-q2-policing-performance-report.pdf>

122 <https://www.copfs.gov.uk/publications/equality-and-diversity>

123 <https://www.spa.police.uk/spa-media/as5paqup/rep-b-20200918-item-7-policing-performance-report-q1.pdf>

A survey by Disability Equality Scotland also found that experience of discrimination and hate crimes increased for disabled workers during lockdown, with fears that public understanding has degraded.¹²⁴

What are the evidence gaps?

While there have been reported increases in hate crime, domestic abuse and sexual exploitation, caution needs to be applied before attributing all the changes seen to the pandemic.

Access to justice has also been impacted by backlogs in solemn and summary criminal business in the Scottish Courts.¹²⁵ While at the end of last year court business was beginning to return to normal levels of activity, other parts of the justice system were under strain. For example, physical distancing requirements had, and continue to, constrain the work of criminal justice social workers, and prisons are near capacity. With the emergence of a new lockdown, court activity is likely to be constrained in the interim.

While the qualitative research noted above provides valuable insights into the experience of people experiencing domestic abuse and other forms of VAWG, it provides only a partial picture. As with other research on domestic abuse, it should be noted that even the most detailed and high quality measure of domestic abuse will only relate to a small proportion of the total domestic abuse experienced in Scotland. Domestic abuse is an under-reported and often hidden crime. The Scottish Crime and Justice Survey for 2016-17 and 2017-18 combined, for example, estimates that the police came to know about just under one in five of adults' most recent incidents of partner abuse, therefore there will clearly be some limit to the value of any single measure as an accurate reflection of total domestic abuse in Scotland.

The Scottish Government will publish new research into hate crime on 23 February 2021. The report will present findings from a study by Scottish Government statisticians into the characteristics of police-recorded hate crime in 2018-19, based on a review of crime records. This will include demographic information on those involved (victims and perpetrators), and information on the social groups that perpetrators were perceived to have shown prejudice towards. The Scottish Government continue to work with Police Scotland and stakeholders to achieve a sustainable solution for the production of regular disaggregated information on hate crime.

124 <https://yoursayondisability.scot/weekly-poll-results-covid-19-physical-distancing-week-beginning-25-may/>

125 <https://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/docs/default-source/aboutscs/reports-and-data/publications/scts-respond-recover-renew.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

What is our policy and budget response in 2021-22?

The Justice Portfolio continues to invest in a range of measures to prevent crime, including hate crime and violence against women and girls.

An essential element of our wider approach to tackling hate crime is the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill that we are currently taking through parliament. The Bill consolidates, modernises and extends hate crime legislation in Scotland. It adds age as an additional characteristic and includes a power to enable the characteristic of 'sex' to be added at a later date. The Bill provides for new 'stirring up of hatred' offences for age, disability, race, religion, sexual orientation, transgender identity and variations in sex characteristics. Currently there are only offences of stirring up racial hatred. As well as delivering consolidated, modernised and updated hate crime legislation, our budget in 2021-22 allows us to continue to work with stakeholders, including Police Scotland, to tackle and encourage reporting of hate crime. We will work with Police Scotland, local authorities and wider partners to safeguard those individuals who become vulnerable to divisive and radicalising narratives, including as a result of having been disconnected from positive influences during lockdown.

The portfolio's continuing investment to tackle VAWG will have an ongoing and positive impact on women and young people. Significant funding is also provided to front line VAWG support services and other projects from the Equalities budget and Equally Safe fund.¹²⁶ In 2021-22, we will maintain core levels of funding to support victims through a range of front line specialist services, including specialist court advocacy services. We will increase support for women involved in prostitution, recognising the impact of the recent pandemic and the need to ensure that both specialist and mainstream services are available to them. We continue to invest in the innovative and accredited Caledonian System domestic abuse programme so that more male perpetrators of domestic abuse can receive specific rehabilitation services to address and challenge their harmful behaviours. Seventy-five percent of the population of Scotland live in local authority areas which deliver the Caledonian System, meaning that more male perpetrators will receive the right rehabilitation services to address the issues giving rise to their offending behaviour. The Promoting Equality and Human Rights budget will invest over £18 million to tackle VAWG in 2021-22 through a wide range of projects. The Delivering Equally Safe Fund opened to applications in December 2020 with a closing date of 28 April 2021. Organisations who work to tackle VAWG are being invited to apply to the £13 million fund which will support work to develop and support front line organisations and projects that broaden access to support survivors and further their vital work over the next three years.

¹²⁶ Last year we invested over £12 million and will increase this to £13 million in 2022.

Our Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan was also updated in October 2020 in response to COVID-19 and in light of concerns about increases in domestic abuse. We will continue to work with stakeholders to support positive housing outcomes for victims of domestic abuse and will shortly be setting out our plans to implement recommendations from the working group on improving housing outcomes for women and children experiencing domestic abuse. We will continue to invest in transformation of the system from the £50 million Ending Homelessness Together Fund, including to support victims of domestic abuse to secure positive housing outcomes.

The third sector plays a key role in supporting children, young people and their families. The Children, Young People and Families Early Intervention and Adult Learning and Empowering Communities Fund provides greater stability to organisations supporting children, young people and families. Due to the unprecedented challenges being faced by the third sector as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Deputy First Minister took the decision to extend the Fund until the end of March 2022.

The Scottish Government has provided £14 million core funding in each of the six years from 2016-17 to 2021-22 for early intervention and prevention, through the Children, Young People and Families Early Intervention and Adult Learning and Empowering Communities Fund:

- **Childline** has received/will receive £198,000 in each year of the Fund, which has enabled an increased number of counselling sessions and increased opportunities to access support across a number of platforms, resulting in a reduction of ongoing harm and more positive outcomes for vulnerable and at-risk children and young people.
- **Barnardo's Scotland** has received/will receive £300,000 in each year of the Fund, to identify and support children at risk of, or affected by, child sexual exploitation, and provide training for professionals to prevent and tackle child sexual exploitation, including local authorities and police.
- **The Moira Anderson Foundation** will receive £25,000 in each year of the Fund, to provide therapy and support for children and young people to overcome the negative impacts of child sexual abuse.
- **Stop it Now! Scotland** received £39,000 in Years 2 and 3 and received/will receive £19,000 in Years 4, 5 and 6 of the Fund, to support the development and maintenance of an online resource to aid the public and professionals to identify and prevent child sexual abuse.

The third sector has played a critical role in supporting vulnerable children and families during the pandemic:

- The Scottish Government provided a £350 million funding package through the **COVID-19 Communities Fund**, including a £50 million Wellbeing Fund to help organisations requiring additional support to work with at-risk people worst affected by the crisis.

- **Childline** received £60,000 to adapt and respond to rising demand, and ensure continued service to meet the growing counselling need from children and young people.
- **Stop it Now! Scotland** received £15,236 to adapt their service delivery to respond to the increased risks facing children across Scotland during the pandemic, and to develop tailored resources to replace outreach work.

How are we working to evaluate policies and close evidence gaps?

We have already invested in four grant projects which will explore the experiences of women, children and minority ethnic victims of crime within the criminal justice system:

- Lived Experiences of Victims of Coercive Control, Stalking and Related Crimes, as they progress through the Criminal Justice System.
- Children's Reconceptualisation of 'Justice': Experiences, Expectations, and Aspirations, which aims to explore children's expectations and experiences of justice, along with their aspirations for justice.
- The Use of Sexual History Evidence and 'Private Data' in Scottish Sexual Offences Trials, which will explore processes and practices on the use of complainers' 'private data' in sexual offences trials, from the point of reporting to the police, through the investigation process, to the adversarial trial proceedings; and the impact that these processes and practices have on sexual offences complainers' experiences of the criminal justice system.
- Diversifying Justice: Revealing Viable Pathways for South Asian Women, which will explore South Asian women's end-to-end experiences of criminal justice in the context of domestic abuse, including help-seeking during and following domestic abuse.

As part of the legislative reporting requirement for the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act, the Scottish Government will be gathering data and information on the experiences of child and adult witnesses involved in Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act cases at court. The report to Parliament is due following the end of the first reporting period in spring 2022.

Analysts in the Justice portfolio have also recently published (9 December 2020) a comprehensive international evidence review of What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls. The report assesses the effectiveness of primary prevention interventions, highlighting moderating factors for their successful implementation.

Cabinet has made a commitment to address gender inequality through taking forward work to progress, in principal, the development of a criminal offence of misogynistic harassment. Justice and Equality analysts will work jointly on gathering relevant evidence, including identifying international evidence of current thinking on the criminal law relating to misogynistic harassment.

A Cross Justice Working Group has been convened to improve race and ethnicity data across the justice system. Working group membership includes key justice organisations, Scottish Government analysts, academics and stakeholders. The aim is to establish what

is currently known on the experience of different ethnic groups within Scotland's justice system, identify evidence gaps, and work collaboratively to improve the collection and reporting of data and evidence on race. The group will report to the National Justice Board and to the Cabinet Secretary.

The Scottish Government has established a Recover, Renew, Transform (RRT) programme, for the justice system to recover essential services and transform how the system operates to ensure a resilient, effective justice system now and for the future. The programme is overseen by the Criminal Justice Board.

The effective consideration of human rights and equality issues is central to this work, and an Advisory Group provides insight into the varied rights and needs of those impacted by the system and considers how best to reflect the views of individuals with lived experience. The group also assists in informing equality and human rights impact assessments across the programme, comments on further evaluation and monitoring requirements, and provides guidance on mitigations required and trauma-informed approaches which could be adopted.

The Scottish Government will also publish new research into hate crime on 23 February 2021, as discussed above.

SUMMARY OF KEY BUDGET COMMITMENTS BY PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS

This chapter provides an overview of how the protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation) and socio-economic disadvantage are impacted by the Scottish Budget 2021-22. Please note that this summary responds to the inequalities and the responses discussed in the EFSBS templates (see Annex A). As the templates responded to up to two key inequalities per protected characteristic or socio-economic disadvantage, they only illustrate a selection of key policy and budget responses per portfolio.

The effects of COVID-19 layer on top of existing structural imbalances and are predicted to be particularly severe for people on low incomes. As well as experiencing higher rates of positive cases and mortality from COVID-19 than people on higher incomes, they are more likely to experience poorer underlying mental and physical health and are also more likely to be in insecure work without financial reserves. COVID-19 has highlighted how people on low incomes often lack the space, resources, digital access and flexible working arrangements that people on higher incomes can access. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this has made it harder for them to cope with regulations, but these impacts highlight broader issues of inequality. As noted earlier, we know that poverty has higher prevalence across the protected characteristics so the funding commitments below will also have wider relevance.

Socio-economic Disadvantage

The development of responses to the COVID pandemic has been mindful of the need to support low income households, for example in the support for self-isolation and the proximity of testing sites to centres of population and main public transport routes. There is ongoing support to reduce health problems more prevalent in deprived areas, with specific commitments to support reductions in child obesity, improve physical activity, and to tackle drug and alcohol misuse. The Scottish Attainment Challenge, including Pupil Equity Funding, focuses specifically on children in low income families to ensure that they can reach their potential, with this further supported by the widening access programme and bursary payments for students. The commitments to expand early learning and childcare will benefit all children, but priority children, including those who are socio-economically disadvantaged, can access provision from age two rather than three.

Policy commitments continue to support low income households directly through improving employment options (see key risks 1,2 and 3), through improving digital inclusion (see key risk 7) and through tackling child poverty (key risk 8). The No One Left Behind programme takes a person-centred approach to helping people into employment.

The Scottish Child Payment, which comes on-stream in 2021-22 along with continued support to the Scottish Welfare Fund, the Tackling Child Poverty Fund, affordable housing programme, Free School Meals and other Scottish benefits, all directly increase income for low income people and families.

In other portfolios there is recognition of the higher rate of road casualties in the most deprived communities and responses to air pollution, flood management, access to electric vehicles and the increased planting of trees to improve greenspaces near more deprived areas as part of Central Scotland Green Network. All of these can impact positively on socio-economically disadvantaged households, who we know are more at risk of negative impacts of air pollution and lack access to quality greenspace. The increased budget for community policing may help people in more deprived areas feel more safe. Finally, funding commitments also seek to increase the influence that socio-economically disadvantaged people can have through local place planning and community regeneration.

Age

Children and young people

The Scottish Budget 2021-22 funds a number of policy areas which aim to improve the life experience and chances of Scotland's children and young people.

Tackling child poverty is a core ambition of the Scottish Government and as key risk 8 shows, the 2021-22 budget continues to fund policies that seek to increase income from employment and social security or reduce costs of living for low income families.

Several policy commitments aim to widen skills and improve access to education and opportunities among Scotland's children and young people. The expansion of early learning and childcare will benefit all three and four year old children and eligible two year olds. At school age, continued investments will support the ongoing delivery of the Scottish Attainment Challenge, including the Pupil Equity Fund. The implementation of an Equity Audit will also aim to deepen our understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on children from disadvantaged backgrounds, and set clear areas of focus for accelerating recovery. Additional funding is committed for various technologies to support digital learning and teaching, including £25 million for digital devices for school-aged learners. This funding will also have a positive impact on advancing equality of attainment for children with Additional Support Needs by continuing to provide additional resources to promote learning and development.

The Scottish Budget 2021-22 continues to invest in the training and employment of young people. Various employment policies are detailed in key risk 2 as part of the Young Person's Guarantee and Developing the Young Workforce programme. In addition, continued funding of Educational Maintenance Allowance, Higher Education Student Support, the National Transition Training Fund and bursaries and loans to support undergraduates studying in Scotland maintains the delivery of work-relevant learning to all young people, providing them with skills for the current and future job markets.

Continued investment in the Scotrail franchise will also provide affordable fares to job seekers and the newly employed – who are predominantly young people – on all routes in Scotland. Furthermore, sustained funding for the Bus Service Operators Grant will help ensure an extensive bus network, benefiting young people as frequent users of bus services. In 2021-22, we will also support the introduction of free bus travel for 5-18 year olds.

The Scottish Budget 2021-22 will increase investment in services to improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people. The Mental Health Transition and Recovery Plan outlines the Scottish Government's response to the mental health impacts of COVID-19. The Plan sets out actions to offset inequalities for both specific populations who may be disproportionately affected, such as young people, as well as improving mental health outcomes at a population level. The budget also supports the Young Carer Grant, providing annual financial support to 16, 17 and 18 year old carers.

Older People

Older people are more likely to have underlying health conditions, making them more susceptible to the severe negative health effects of COVID-19. As key risk 4 notes, 9 in 10 deaths involving COVID-19 in Scotland have been among those aged 65 and over and two-fifths have been among those aged 85 and over. Older people are also more likely to live alone, less likely to have internet access, and less likely to use it even if they do have it, which have potentially significant implications for their wellbeing, especially during lockdown. They are also more likely to live in care homes or be receiving formal or informal care at home, both of which have seen significant service changes during the pandemic.

Many programmes within the Scottish Budget 2021-22 will positively impact on the health and wellbeing of older people. This budget supports delivery of our 'A Fairer Scotland for Older People' framework, challenging the inequalities people face as they age. It will continue to provide support to mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on older and socially isolated people. The age-based vaccination programme which started in 2020 will continue to prioritise those with clinical risk factors. The Affordable Housing Supply Programme supports the delivery of flexible housing capable of being adapted to suit peoples' changing requirements, and the adaptations programme delivered by Registered Social Landlords has been increased. The increased budget for the Scottish Police Authority will allow Police Scotland to maintain officer numbers and deliver on its new cyber strategy, which will particularly benefit older people, who are most at risk of cyber fraud. The budget for the Connecting Scotland fund will offer training and devices to older people to allow them be more connected to friends, family and services.

Disability

Disabled people are likely to experience a range of health and social impacts resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, including increased risk of severe illness or death; difficulties accessing food and other essential supplies due to shortages of food in shops; difficulties affording food; inability to get online shopping slots; and social isolation. This interlinks with existing inequalities, where the disability employment rate is lower, poverty rates are higher, and reliance on social care higher than for non-disabled people. Many of the employment schemes noted in key risks 1 and 2, especially the No One Left Behind programme, will be beneficial in helping disabled people to obtain fair employment.

Expenditure on disability benefits in 2021-22, which includes the Child Disability Payment, is forecast to be £3 billion with delivery expected to have a positive impact both on disabled people and families with disabled children. Families with a disabled child or adult are a priority group for the Tackling Child Poverty Fund and will also be helped by the Scottish Child Payment. The £306 million budget for Carer's Allowance and £42 million for Carer's Allowance Supplement will also be of benefit to families with a disabled adult or child. To enhance the support provided to children and young people with Additional Support Needs, the Scottish Government is providing £15 million of funding in schools to further support the provision of front line staff, contributing to the improvement of outcomes for this group.

The Quality and Improvement budget in the Health portfolio includes funding for the provision of a number of policies which will benefit disabled people, including those with complex pain needs, those requiring access to social care and those with a sensory loss. Continued investment in adaptations, meanwhile, will support people to make the changes required to their home to make it easier to go about daily activities. The budget also provides for a review to streamline and improve overall adaptations systems.

Several policies in the budget seek to improve access to services and accessibility for disabled people, including the equality funding provided to support disabled people's organisations, the refinements made to the Deposit Return Scheme, and the funding from Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity to Disability Equality Scotland to monitor and report on public realm accessibility during the course of the pandemic. Ongoing liaison with disabled people's organisations is making sure that elections will be safe and accessible and that access to postal voting is available. In terms of criminal jury trials, each remote jury centre that the Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service is leasing for the purposes of hosting jurors for Solemn trials has facilities that enable access for those with disabilities.

Gender Reassignment

There is evidence that transgender people may suffer poorer outcomes in relation to the wider population, including in relation to homelessness, health and employment. The budget allocated to the operation of the Executive Agency, Social Security Scotland, will be used to collect and analyse equality data on applicants and clients in order to assess social security outcomes for transgender people compared to other groups, as the caseload increases.

Funding from this budget supports delivery of the Mental Health Transition and Recovery Plan, addressing key mental health concerns for the Scottish population. The Plan sets out actions to offset inequalities for specific populations who may be disproportionately affected (including trans people), as well as improving mental health outcomes at a population level.

The budget invests in a range of measures to prevent crime, including hate crime, and to promote trans-inclusive policy. Organisations wishing to access funding through our Delivering Equally Safe funding stream will be required to submit an LBTI inclusion plan to improve approaches to trans inclusion.

Pregnancy and Maternity

There are a range of policies funded in this year's budget which will be of benefit to mothers through pregnancy and the first years of a new baby's life. These include the Baby Box as well as income-based help with Best Start Grants, Best Start Foods and the Scottish Child Payment. The Parental Employment Support programme, Women Returner Programme and Flexibility Works can all help mothers return to, and cope in, the labour market. The expansion of early learning and childcare will almost double families' entitlement to high quality early learning and childcare to 1,140 hours a year for all three and four year olds and eligible two year olds. Additional funding into mental health care and recruitment will help the high numbers of women who develop a mental illness while pregnant or following birth. Funding in 2021-22 will also continue to focus on the next phase of the Best Start Programme implementation, which increased the number of midwifery students and introduced continuity of midwifery and obstetric care. The next phase of this programme will be implemented for women with multiple complex social needs, and women from black and minority ethnic backgrounds for whom there are higher rates of negative outcomes. Through our continued funding, the Scottish Prison Service and other agencies will continue to take forward our progressive plans to transform the female custodial estate to address the specific needs of women, including pregnant women.

Race

The impact of COVID-19 on the minority ethnic community has been quite profound, with higher infection and mortality rates for some groups as well as greater economic impacts. This, combined with the pressures caused by withdrawal from the EU for European nationals and the raised profile of structural inequality and discrimination created by the Black Lives Matter movement, mean that responding to racial issues is an increasing priority for 2021-22. Several portfolios recognise that a significant and long-term cultural change is required and have committed to improve data and evidence to build from a strong base (for example, approaches to reviewing the Race Equality Framework, the Expert Reference Group on COVID-19 and Ethnicity, the Race and Justice data working group, and commitments to improve Social Security data).

Poverty rates for many minority ethnicities are high, so all funded commitments noted under socio-economic disadvantage will be relevant here, although they may need tailoring at implementation level to ensure awareness and take-up across all communities.

In addition, various employment and fair work policies, as noted in key risks 1, 2 and 3 and the Economy, Fair Work and Culture template (Annex A), include substantial tailored support for people of minority ethnicities including the fair work Flexible Development Fund, Women Returners Programme, Young Person's Guarantee and No One Left Behind.

Additional communications support is being developed to help EU Nationals apply for settled status and to ensure that everyone for whom English is not a first language knows how to vote safely in the forthcoming elections. Work is also funded to educate social enterprises on the barriers experienced by people of minority ethnicities and to increase board representation.

Religion and Belief

The Scottish Budget 2021-22 will continue to invest in programmes to support equality in religion and belief.

Tackling hate crime remains a key focus for a number of protected characteristics. The Justice portfolio invests in a range of measures to prevent crime, including religiously aggravated crime. An essential element of our wider approach to tackling hate crime is the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill, which we are currently taking through parliament. Ongoing investments by COPFS will support both services for victims of hate crimes and educational campaigns to increase awareness of individual rights and responsibilities in relation to offensive behaviour. This will have a positive impact across the protected characteristics, including in tackling inequalities related to religion and belief.

Funding is continuing in 2021-22 for a Hate Crime Charter for transport via Disability Equality Scotland. The purpose of this is to ensure that people across the protected groups feel comfortable and safe using public transport - this includes being free from hate crime, bullying and harassment when travelling.

Muslim adults are more likely to be in poverty and therefore more likely to be eligible for a qualifying benefit such as Scottish Child Payment. The Social Security budget also funds the Funeral Support Payment. Processing applications within 10 working days is expected to have a positive impact for faith groups, such as Muslims, that require funerals to take place within certain timescales, as they will receive the payment quickly thus reducing the time between the funeral and when payment is received.

Scottish Government officials are very aware of, and focused on, the importance of faith and worship for a significant proportion of the Scottish population and the benefits to spiritual and wider wellbeing that communal worship can bring. Funding is made available to enable online streaming and virtual attendance of services, particularly by vulnerable and shielding individuals unable to attend whilst places of worship were open.

Sex

As Scotland's Gender Equality Index shows, gender inequality exists in a range of domains including work, money, time, knowledge, power and health.¹²⁷ Women across the range of protected characteristics can face multiple discrimination, including girls, young women, disabled women, women from minority ethnicities, lesbian, bisexual and trans women, lone parents and older women.¹²⁸

In the pre-COVID-19 labour market, women were unequal in terms of pay, participation and progression due to a variety of drivers including occupational segregation, job valuation, discrimination, and time available to work. Key risks 1, 2 and 3 outline our response to employment participation risks for women, which builds on the Gender Pay Gap Action Plan and includes employability schemes, encouragement of flexible working practices through TimeWise and Flexibility Works, expansion of early learning and childcare provision, and a 'What Works' centre where specialist gender support can be accessed that will give public bodies the third sector and business the tools to act to change culture. Funding will continue to support work to improve fair work in social care, where women make up the majority of the workforce. However such occupational segregation is also being tackled with the gender targets of Scottish Funding Council and the Skills Development Scotland's Equality Action Plan, both funded through this year's budget, seeking to reduce occupational sectoral divisions at the start of careers. Specific schemes have also been established to encourage women into agriculture and aquaculture, where they are under-represented.

Women tended to have poorer mental health pre-COVID, which has worsened during the pandemic. The funding of the COVID-19 Mental Health Transition and Recovery Plan, and the programmes it supports as set out in key risk 6, should be beneficial for women and especially young women.¹²⁹ Domestic abuse appears to have increased during COVID-19 and key risk 10 sets out the evidence and our response, which builds on the ongoing Equally Safe programme. The continued investment in the Ending Homelessness Together Fund allows for continued work to support positive housing outcomes for victims of domestic abuse.

Women continue to take on primary care roles more often than men and will benefit from the Carer's Allowance and the Carer's Allowance Supplement from within this budget. The Scottish Child Payment, along with Best Start, will also be beneficial to low income women and men who are parents.

As noted in key risks 4 and 5, age-standardised deaths rates from COVID-19 for men were significantly higher than for women, as were alcohol-specific and drug-related deaths. Funding to support the COVID-19 response and vaccination programme and new commitment's to tackle Scotland's drug death crisis will be beneficial.

¹²⁷ [Scotland's Gender Equality Index 2020 \(data.gov.scot\)](https://data.gov.scot)

¹²⁸ [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): evidence gathered for Scotland's route map - equality and Fairer Scotland impact assessment - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)

¹²⁹ [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): mental health - transition and recovery plan - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)

Sexual Orientation

The Scottish Budget 2021-22 will invest in several programmes that help to build on the progress made on equality for lesbian, gay and bisexual plus people. This includes a new funding stream to support the mainstreaming and embedding of equality and human rights across Scotland, with outcomes aligned closely with the National Performance Framework.

As for other protected groups, hate crime remains a high priority. We will continue to work with Police Scotland and wider stakeholders to tackle hate crime and prejudice, including supporting the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill which is currently progressing through parliament. We recognise the need to improve hate crime data and evidence, ensuring disaggregated data can be provided by Police Scotland on a sustainable basis. The Scottish Police Authority budget will also continue to provide funding to support the Scottish LGBTI Staff Association in its role to advance LGBTI equality, inclusion and support throughout policing in Scotland and within the communities they serve.

Lesbian, gay and bisexual people and those of other sexual orientations were more likely to report poor mental and physical health than heterosexual people, including higher levels of smoking.¹³⁰ The range of funding across the Health and Sport portfolio will support the LGBT community, including with mental health.

The Scottish Budget 2021-22 will also support the National Registers of Scotland to include voluntary questions on sexual orientation and transgender status/history in the Population Census in 2022. This will allow for increased measurement of sexual orientation and the development of baseline data on gender identity.

130 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/sexual-orientation-scotland-2017-summary-evidence-base/pages/4/>

CONCLUSION

In sum, the Scottish Budget 2021-22 is investing in a range of programmes that address inequalities across the protected characteristics. Further details of the funding programmes discussed in this overview are provided in the key risks in the first part of this report and the portfolio templates in Annex A (as well as in the main Scottish Budget 2021-22 reports and tables).

We very much welcome feedback on this new format and approach for the EFSBS.

You can contact Liz Hawkins (liz.hawkins@gov.scot) or the Chair of the Equality Budget Advisory Group ([Dr Angela O' Hagan](#)) via the secretariat, Gillian Achurch (gillian.achurch@gov.scot).

ANNEXES

The following annexes can be found under 'Supporting files' on the Scottish Government webpage for this publication:

- Annex A: Portfolio Assessment of Equality and Fairer Scotland Impacts of the Scottish Budget
- Annex B: Developing the Approach to Equality and Human Rights Budgeting
- Annex C: Summary of the Equality and Fairer Scotland Budget Statement 2021-22



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