

TiPSE

The **T**erritorial **D**imension of **P**overty and **S**ocial **E**xclusion in Europe

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Work Package 2.4

Case Study Report

Western Isles

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The partnership behind the ESPON Programme consists of the EU Commission and the Member States of the EU27, plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. Each partner is represented in the ESPON Monitoring Committee.

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The ESPON TiPSE Project:

The TiPSE project has been commissioned by the European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion (ESPON) programme. It is concerned with the issue of poverty, and processes of social exclusion in Europe.

One of the key challenges for the EU, in its pursuit of social, economic and territorial cohesion, is to address regional or local concentrations of poverty and social exclusion. In terms of practical governance, this remains a national responsibility within the context of EU strategic guidance. In practice, regional or local administrations are often in 'the front line'; implementing national policies to ameliorate deprivation and exclusion. At a higher level, the EU defines its role as identifying best practices and promoting mutual learning.

Poverty and social exclusion are essentially relative concepts, arguably only meaningful within a specified geographical context. This underlines the essential roles to be played by observation, measurement, and careful data analysis, as preparations for intervention. The TiPSE project aims to support policy, both by enhancing the evidence base and by identifying existing good practice.

A central objective of the TiPSE project is to establish macro and micro-scale patterns of poverty and social exclusion across the ESPON space. This will be achieved by compiling a regional database, and associated maps, of poverty and social exclusion indicators. Such quantitative analysis of geographical patterns is considered a fundamental part of the evidence base for policy.

In addition, in order to better understand the various social and institutional processes which are the context of these patterns, a set of ten case studies are to be carried out. These will be more qualitative in approach, in order to convey holistic portraits of different kinds of poverty and social exclusion as experienced in a wide variety of European territorial contexts. The principal goal for these investigations will be to bring forward clear illustrations of the social, economic, institutional and spatial processes which lead to poverty and social exclusion in particular geographic contexts.

The selection of case study areas has been carried out with careful regard to the wide variety of geographic, cultural and policy contexts which characterise Europe. The ten case studies are also intended to highlight a range of different 'drivers' of poverty and social exclusion, including labour market conditions, educational disadvantage, ethnicity, poor access to services and urban segregation processes. A second objective of the case studies will be to identify policy approaches which can effectively tackle exclusion, and thus strengthen territorial cohesion.

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Executive summary

Introduction

- This case study explores processes and dynamics related to poverty and social exclusion in the Western Isles, located on the extreme north western edge of the EU. The Western Isles is part of the Highlands and Islands NUTS 2 region in Scotland.
- It is a predominantly rural and remote region, classified as being sparsely populated, reflecting characteristics of a 'post productive countryside'. It is 'below average' in terms of key economic performance indicators such as economic activity rates, GDP indicators, disposable income per head and average gross weekly pay.
- The population of the Western Isles was 27,700 a slight increase since 2001 (NRS 2012b). Twenty two per cent of the Western Isles population live in very remote small towns and 78 per cent in very remote rural areas (Scottish Government 2012a Table 5.3).
- The case study was based on a combination of desk based research and semi-structured interviews conducted with ten stakeholders who were identified as having local, regional and national expertise on poverty and social exclusion in relation to the Western Isles and remote rural areas.

Poverty and social exclusion in the Western Isles

- According to the overall Scottish Index of Multiple deprivation (SIMD) indicator, the Western Isles does not appear to be deprived as none of its 36 datazones are within the top 15% in Scotland. Although few areas in rural Scotland show geographical concentrations of multiple deprivation, this does not mean that rural deprivation does not exist (Bramley and Watkins 2013; Hirsch et al 2013).
- The estimated At Risk of Poverty (ARoP) rate (before housing costs) of the Western Isles ranked sixth, at 21.6% in 2008/9 (Bramley and Watkins 2013, p. 26). Similarly, according to the estimates carried out using the World Bank PovMap methodology in the TiPSE project, the Western Isles had the third highest ARoP rate, both before and after housing costs.
- Overall the Western Isles is by far the most "access deprived" local authority area in Scotland. In the context of the SIMD, 30 of its 36 datazones are in the most deprived sextile. The 'access to service' score is composed of travel-time measurements for both private cars and public transport to the following services: general practitioners (local National Health Service doctors), petrol stations, post offices, primary and secondary schools, and 'retail centres'.
- With regard to accessing services using public transport the Western Isles retains the 'top spot' and are substantially more deprived than the other Island groups (Orkney and Shetland) and mainland Highland. This suggests that the Western

Isles access to service deprivation is very much driven' by the extreme inadequacy of its public transport provision.

Factors and processes shaping poverty and social exclusion in the Western Isles

Five interrelated factors were identified as significant in increasing the vulnerability of some groups to social exclusion and poverty in the Western Isles.

Remoteness and sparsity: Remoteness, both its geographical location and being a collection of Islands, and sparsity (population size and dispersed population) were closely associated with three issues:

- Challenges in accessing services and poor public transport
- High costs of living
- Limited labour market/employment opportunities

Demographic trends: A growing ageing population, declining fertility rates and high levels of youth out-migration were identified as posing specific challenges for the Islands and its communities, leading to a predominance of older people which is projected to continue. The ability of service providers to respond to these trends especially with regard to developing appropriate housing provision and providing care for the elderly in a dispersed context were identified as major challenges, especially in a context of reducing public services and increasing centralisation of services.

Economic climate and changes in the state welfare provision: The financial crisis and uncertainties around recovery were identified as exacerbating the situation of those who are already vulnerable. Cuts in public expenditure at the national and regional/local levels respectively were associated with the reduction and centralisation of public services, increase in individual/household debt and lack of employment opportunities. In addition significant changes to the welfare system which have been introduced by the UK Welfare Reform Act 2012 and the Pensions Act 2011 were predicted to exacerbate the situation of those already in poverty and who are excluded.

Social /cultural factors: Social support, values of mutual respect and social cohesion associated with close knit communities were acknowledged as being important in supporting individuals who were older or in need. However, the prevalence of stigma and judgemental attitudes also leads to a denial that poverty and social exclusion exists and results in the stigmatisation of those in poverty, those who are unemployed and those claiming benefits.

Leadership and partnership working: The need for strategic leadership and vision at the highest levels across key agencies was identified as important in developing appropriate policies and practices related to addressing poverty and social exclusion in the Western Isles.

Perspectives on poverty and social exclusion and groups at risk

Stakeholders reinforced the complex and multilayered nature of people's situations and identities when it came to highlighting specific groups at risk of poverty and

social exclusion. A range of structural (e.g. location, labour market, declining public resources and services and welfare changes) and individual/circumstantial factors (e.g. disability, ill-health, age, debt, alcohol/drug addiction etc) were cited as increasing the likelihood that some individuals and groups were at greater risk of social exclusion and poverty. These are briefly described below.

Disability: Specific challenges noted as affecting the disabled in remote rural locations such as the Western Isles included: poor access to appropriate services; fewer support organisations serving disabled groups; and the impact of changing entitlements to benefits for disabled people across all ages and socio-economic backgrounds.

Age: A number of factors were cited as impacting on older people making it difficult for them to age in a place of their choice and increasing their social isolation. These included: the challenges of providing home care services due to dispersed settlements and an aging population; limited or no access to appropriate housing or facilities such as sheltered accommodation; centralisation of services in towns including the location of care homes for older people; costs of fuel and lack of public transport; and cost of food and household goods and services. For younger people or those economically active factors cited were: limited educational and training opportunities, despite recent improvements; and lack of skilled, well paid and secure employment. These factors were noted as leading to high levels of youth outmigration for those that can leave and limited opportunities for those that remain.

Households: social housing, 'solo' living and debt :The introduction of “the bedroom tax” and changes in the payment of housing benefit in particular were identified as increasing the risk of poverty and social exclusion for those living in social housing as well as those living on their own. This was particularly serious in a context where housing has not kept up with demographic changes (solo living and smaller households) and there is a lack of small one or two bedroom houses.

Debt: Debt as a result of the economic downturn and changes in state provided welfare benefits were identified as not only affecting low income households but also middle income households, across all ages. This was exacerbated by the increasing reliance on private loan companies due to the lack of access to mainstream financial lending services.

Policies and initiatives-tackling poverty and social exclusion

Policy making and implementation related to poverty and social exclusion are distributed across different levels of governments/governance which includes the UK and Scottish Governments, respectively and Local Authorities and between different policy areas (education, economic, housing, social work etc). This leads to fragmented policies and in some cases conflicting policy outcomes.

Scotland

- In Scotland, the Scottish Government’s strategy for addressing poverty and exclusion is reflected in its National Performance Framework, which all public

bodies including Local Authorities are required to address and report on annually (Scottish Government 2011a).

- Policies related to poverty and exclusion in particular are located within the 'Social Solidarity' target where the emphasis is on early intervention and prevention and a commitment to increasing the income of the 'poorest 30% of households by 2017' (Scottish Government 2011b, p22). There are also commitments to addressing inequalities between groups, improving economic activity rates between regions and improving public services (Scottish Government 2011a; 2011b).
- Whilst there are initiatives to address fuel poverty (an issue affecting remote rural households in poverty) and transportation costs for 'fragile' communities such as the Western Isles through a pilot (Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) Scheme), the extent to which poverty and social exclusion policies are sensitive to place is debatable.

Western Isles

In the context of the Western Isles there were a number of steps being taken to address poverty and social exclusion:

- The establishment of the Poverty Action Group (PAG) in 2012, a cross sectoral multi-agency working group to address poverty and social exclusion in the Western Isles was identified as a vital step forward in developing a more strategic approach to addressing poverty and social exclusion.
- Initiatives to improve welfare entitlement take up (income maximisation) amongst older people who have been prone to under-claiming their entitlements.
- Responding to the care and support needs of the growing older population in a dispersed context by addressing qualifications, work conditions and career paths in the care sector.
- In addition to working with households to reduce fuel bills by improving energy efficiency in homes and reducing their need for heating, other initiatives cited included: working with researchers to share ideas and promote an exchange about technological developments on renewable energy and improving understanding of behaviours and everyday practices in the use of energy; and developing links with schools to stimulate young people's interest in and knowledge about renewables and issues related to energy.
- Efforts to stimulate jobs and apprenticeships locally (e.g. through procurement) in a range of sectors (e.g. public sector, construction etc) were identified as important in addressing the constraints of the local labour market and the impact of the economic crisis.
- The presence of a strong sense of community and an emphasis on self-help (e.g. community co-ops) were cited as important in developing resilience in relation to addressing poverty and social exclusion.

Policy implications and further research

Validity of European-wide data from local perspectives

- Currently EU2020 monitoring data for poverty and social exclusion is available only for Scotland as a whole (NUTS 1) or IK as a whole. National analysis has recently generated estimates of the At Risk of Poverty rate at NUTS 3. However local stakeholders are well aware of the limitations of simple income poverty indicators, which cannot capture any of the subtleties of poverty and social exclusion in remote rural environments.
- An important specific issue, with clear implications for regions like the Western Isles is the inability of the ARoP rate to take account of regional differences in living costs, which may be substantial in remote rural contexts.

Improving evidence base at local levels

- Obtaining accurate data on poverty and social exclusion at a local authority level, and below, in rural Scotland is a major challenge despite continuing efforts to improve the evidence base. An agreement on indicators to be used and a framework which encompasses the multidimensional aspects of poverty and social exclusion taking into account spatial contexts is an important starting point.
- Greater consideration requires to be given not only to making data more accessible to policy makers working at varying levels, but also enhancing their capacity to use data and research evidence more effectively for policy making.
- Given the roll out of changes in the State Welfare System in the UK, there is a need to track the impact of these changes on those who are in poverty and are socially excluded across different spatial contexts. It is also important to explore and evaluate the extent to which current typologies of welfare regimes accurately reflect the changes being implemented in the state welfare provision in countries such as the UK.

'Holistic' and joined up working

- The emphasis on the multidimensional aspects of social exclusion in this case study – i.e. disadvantage or exclusion in one aspect of life might be linked to a number of others – suggests that there is a need for more holistic multiagency approaches to policy making and implementation to avoid contradictory impacts of varying policies.
- Partnership working as well as more integrated strategies for addressing poverty and social exclusion have to go beyond local levels to include agencies and stakeholders at all levels of government.
- Strong leadership at all levels of governance is an important prerequisite for facilitating change.

Remoteness and rurality

- Policies need to be sensitive to the additional challenges that remoteness/rurality might create in terms of additional costs and in accessing services and employment.
- Despite investments in technological infrastructure (e.g. broadband) the experiences of the Western Isles and other remote rural areas suggest that there continue to be problems with regard to two issues: the quality of service in terms of low broadband width; and some groups continue to be digitally excluded, e.g. older people. It is vital to address the evidence gap regarding access issues, as well as attitudes, skills and behaviours related to adoption of technologies such as the Internet amongst older people to prevent them from being socially excluded in a wider sense.
- There is also a need to develop a more informed understanding of the opportunities and the constraints for market based and third sector based solutions (especially where the emphasis is on reducing costs) respectively, to the provision of public services (e.g. care homes) in particular.
- More research is required to understand the role of self-help and community based solutions towards service delivery and the ownership of assets (such as land and renewables) respectively, in addressing poverty and exclusion at individual and household levels in remote rural communities.

Targeting vs non targeted approaches

- Targeting of groups can be problematic due to the assumptions of homogeneity and can lead to the stigmatisation of particular groups which may be amplified in small communities.
- There is a need for policies /approaches which recognise that poverty and social exclusion are dynamic processes and individual and households may move in and out of poverty/social exclusion over their life course.

Participatory approaches

- Policies need to be sensitive to the prevailing cultural and social attitudes and promote more participatory and sensitive/non-stigmatising approaches to research and developing appropriate policies and solutions to poverty and social exclusion.
- Although there are benefits from the small and sometimes tight knit nature of communities there are also issues related to exercise of power that may make it difficult for all voices to be heard. Consequently it is important to ensure sensitivity and awareness of how diverse voices are included in research as well as the role of specific interest groups in policy making in remote rural communities.

Transferability of results

- Research findings from this Scottish case study resonate with the findings in the TIPSE Spanish case study, as well as remote and rural areas in the EU and elsewhere. The similarities centre on measurement, key drivers and impacts.

- Measuring poverty and social exclusion in remote and rural areas is a challenge in dispersed and sparsely populated contexts and has resulted in rendering those experiencing poverty and social exclusion in rural areas invisible and marginal to debates on poverty and social exclusion generally, as well as in rural development policies and initiatives.
- Key drivers of poverty and social exclusion cited across national contexts in remote and rural areas can be broadly divided into three factors which combine to impact on rural areas and communities and households in various ways:
 - Key features of remoteness and rurality pose specific challenges: geographical location and topographical features (remoteness /island); demographic trends (e.g. ageing, low fertility rates and high levels of youth migration); constrained labour markets; and travel distances.
 - The lack of sensitivity to rurality in mainstream national policies on poverty and social exclusion and with regard to service delivery, transport, labour market structures and local cultures in particular emerges as key challenges in remote and rural areas.
 - The economic crisis and the implementation of 'austerity' measures (e.g. withdrawal /centralisation of services; welfare benefit cuts, etc) are exacerbating poverty and social exclusion in remote and rural areas.
- The multidimensionality of poverty and social exclusion and the varied impacts on different individuals/ groups and households (e.g. lack of access to essential services, high costs, etc.) in remote and rural areas emerged as critical in making sense of poverty and social exclusion.

Understanding the specificities of poverty and social exclusion in remote and rural areas in more depth is important to ensure not only territorial cohesion across the EU, but also in developing and implementing appropriate policies in areas facing similar challenges to ensure the sustainability of these communities.

1 Introduction to Case Study

1.1 Aims of the case study

The Western Isles was one of 10 case studies within the TIPSE project. The aim of the case studies is to complement the European-wide data analysis by a more qualitative focus at a micro-scale level to explore in depth the multiple factors underlying processes of poverty and social exclusion.

The overall aims of the case studies were to:

- explore and understand the diverse and complex nature of and process related to poverty and social exclusion at below NUTS3/LAU 1;
- investigate the association and co-location of poverty and social exclusion;
- cross-check the validity and usefulness of applied European-wide and other data sources, and discuss alternatives how to map PSE processes with suitable indicators or alternative proxies;
- explore the diversity of response approaches and understand the links between local processes and the wider institutional environment; and
- deepen the understanding of how to map and monitor micro-spatial processes and derive recommendations for the monitoring of territorial trends at micro-scale level

The case studies were selected to reflect the diverse European territorial, socio-economic, institutional and policy contexts and challenges. Each case study has focused on one of five specific themes. These were issues of education, unemployment, access to services in rural areas, ethnic minorities and urban segregation patterns. The main aim of this case study was to explore experiences of poverty and social exclusion in a remote rural local authority area - the Western Isles - with a particular focus on the consequences of an ageing population, declining fertility rates and a high rate of youth outmigration.

1.2 Method and sample

The case study has used a combination of methods: a desk based review of key data, academic and grey literature and policy documents relevant to the case study to help set the context and make sense of its findings; and primary research to explore trends, processes and policies related to poverty and social exclusion at the micro level.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten stakeholders who were identified as having local, regional and national expertise on poverty and social exclusion (See list in Annex 1). With the exception of one interview which involved two people the others were one to one. All but two interviews were face-to-face interviews, with two conducted by telephone.

The purpose of the interviews were to: (i) help illuminate the trends, dimensions, processes and impact of poverty of social exclusion in their region; and (ii) to identify the factors that shaped and influenced policies in addressing various aspects of poverty and social exclusion (Annex 2 for Interview Topic Schedule). All but one interview was recorded and transcribed. Analysis of the interviews involved identifying and coding by themes related to the two purposes of the interviews. In addition specific examples of initiatives to address poverty and social exclusion cited by interviewees were also noted as appropriate.

1.3 Report structure

The first three chapters of this report set the context and chapters 4 to 7 are predominantly based on the key issues that have emerged from the stakeholder interviews. The report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2: The regional context
- Chapter 3 Context: poverty and social exclusion in Scotland
- Chapter 4: Factors and Processes Shaping Poverty and Social Exclusion In the Western Isles
- Chapter 5: Poverty and Social Exclusion in the Western Isles: Perspectives and Groups at Risk
- Chapter 6: Poverty and Social Exclusion: Key Issues and Policy Responses and Initiatives
- Chapter 7: Policy Implications and Further Research

2 The Regional Context

This case study focuses on the Western Isles, part of the Highlands and Islands NUTS 2 region in Scotland. These islands are on the extreme north-western edge of the EU, with the Atlantic Ocean on their western side and separated from mainland Scotland by a channel known as “The Minch”, which is 70 kilometres across at its widest point. The islands are known by several different names; including 'the Outer Hebrides' and the Gaelic 'Nah- *Eilean Siar*', (The Gaelic language is spoken by the majority of the population) and 'Comhairle *nan Eilean Siar*' is the official name of the local government unit, and of the NUTS 3 region.

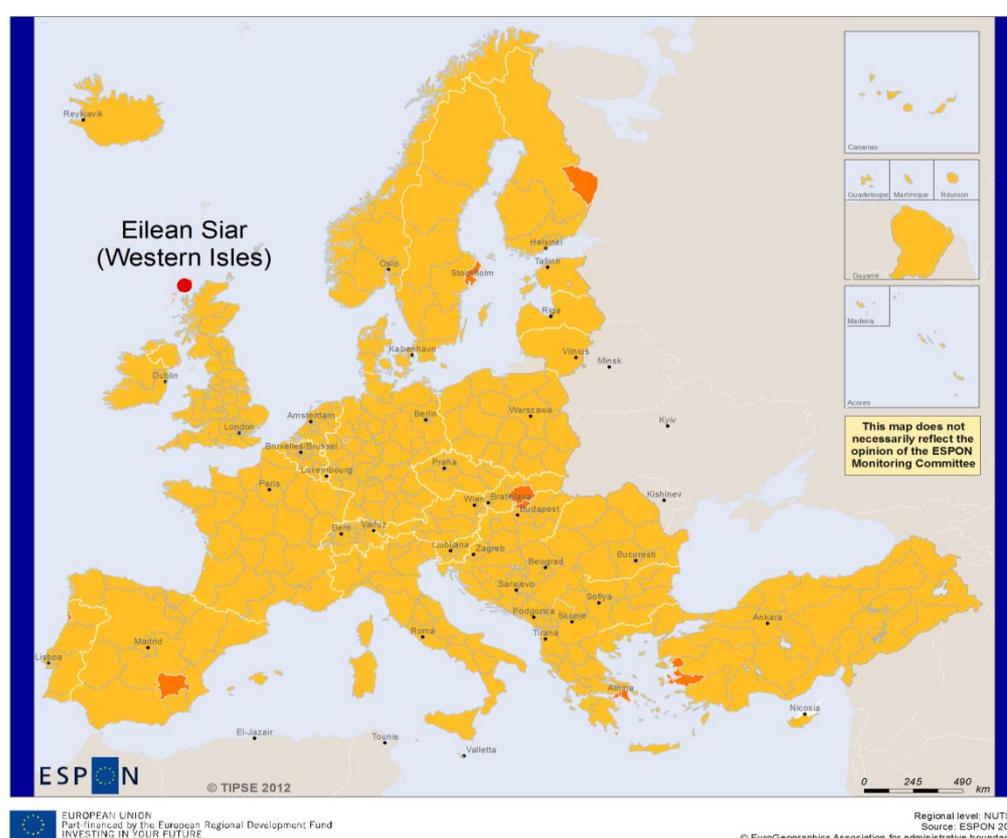
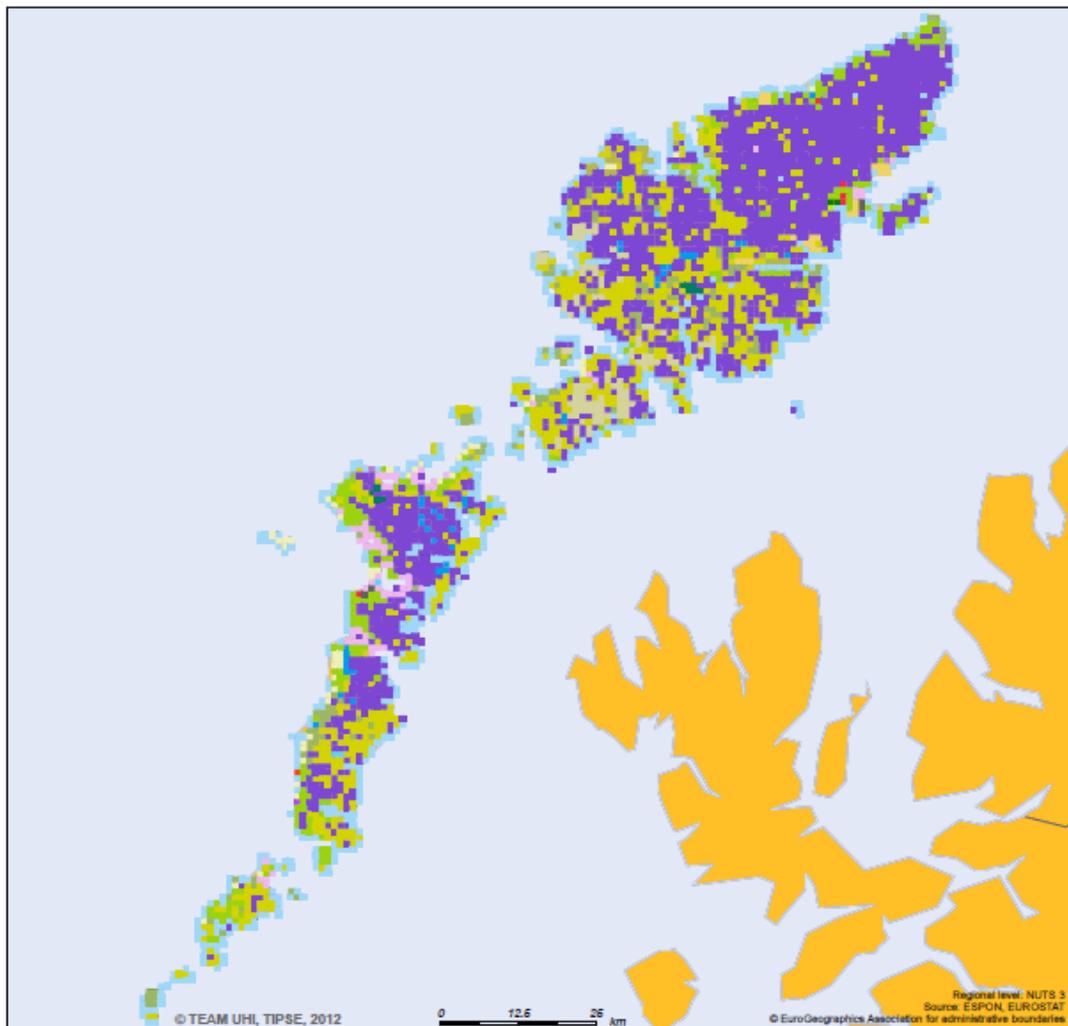


Figure 1: The Western Isles in the context of the ESPON space

The islands extend to a little over 3,000 square kilometres. The landscape is rugged; much of this area is covered by peat bog, rough grazing and rock. There are significant mountain areas especially on the island of Harris, rising to almost 800 metres. The coastline is indented, and there are 7,500 freshwater “lochs”. The best land is around the coastline, where former sand dunes known as “machair” account for the concentration of population close to the shore.



Corine Land Cover Types		
111 - Continuous urban fabric	222 - Fruit trees and berry plantations	332 - Bare rocks
112 - Discontinuous urban fabric	223 - Olive groves	333 - Sparsely vegetated areas
121 - Industrial or commercial units	231 - Pastures	334 - Burnt areas
122 - Road and rail networks and associated land	241 - Annual crops associated with permanent crops	335 - Glaciers and perpetual snow
123 - Port areas	242 - Complex cultivation patterns	411 - Inland marshes
124 - Airports	243 - Land principally occupied by agriculture, with significant areas of natural vegetation	412 - Peat bogs
131 - Mineral extraction sites	244 - Agro-forestry areas	421 - Salt marshes
132 - Dump sites	311 - Broad-leaved forest	422 - Salines
133 - Construction sites	312 - Coniferous forest	423 - Intertidal flats
141 - Green urban areas	313 - Mixed forest	511 - Water courses
142 - Sport and leisure facilities	321 - Natural grasslands	512 - Water bodies
211 - Non-irrigated arable land	322 - Moors and heathland	521 - Coastal lagoons
212 - Permanently irrigated land	323 - Sclerophyllous vegetation	522 - Estuaries
213 - Rice fields	324 - Transitional woodland-shrub	523 - Sea and ocean
221 - Vineyards	331 - Beaches, dunes, sands	<Null> - <Null>

Figure 2: Corine Land Cover Western Isles 2006

Although the surrounding waters were historically a relatively abundant resource, the fishing industry has declined substantially since the middle of the last century. The island landscape and climate provides relatively limited opportunities for agriculture. Small-scale sheep and cattle production, using unenclosed “common” rough grazing land is traditionally combined with fishing or artisan textile production (Harris Tweed) and a variety of self-employment or waged activities in a system known as “crofting”. However, the latter is affected by the aging structure of the population (CnES, undated c). Alongside this traditional way of life various new activities have emerged

in different parts of the islands. For example, service industries in the “capital” (Stornoway), tourism, artistic activities based upon the unique Gaelic culture, food processing, and some engineering relating to the North Sea oil industry as well as a military base in South Uist. Overall with regard to sectoral economic activity and Gross Value Added by sector and per head, the public sector, the construction industry and the primary industries, fishing in particular, are more significant to the Western Isles economy compared to the rest of Scotland (Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1: Employment by sector (per cent of total) 2009

NACE Rev. 2 Category		Western Isles	Highlands and Islands	Scotland	UK	EU27
A	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	3.4	5.1	1.9	1.1	2.2
B-E	Industry (excl. construction)	9.3	12.6	12.0	11.6	18.3
C	Manufacturing	5.9	8.5	8.6	9.9	17.4
F	Construction	8.5	8.7	7.9	8.1	7.6
G-I	Wholesale, retail, transport, accomm, food services	22.9	25.7	24.0	23.8	21.2
J	Information and communication	0.8	1.0	2.2	3.5	1.3
K	Financial and insurance	1.7	1.8	3.8	4.2	1.6
L	Real estate	0.0	0.4	0.7	0.9	0.3
M-N	Professional, scientific, admin. and support	6.8	6.8	9.9	11.1	16.0
O-Q	Public admin., defence, education, health and social work	43.2	32.4	32.1	30.2	27.4
R-U	Arts, entertainment, recreation	4.2	5.5	5.5	5.5	4.2

Source: Eurostat Database, Regional Statistics (Reg) Table [nama_r_e3em95r2]

Table 2: Gross value added by sector and per head 2009

		Western Isles	Highlands and Islands	Scotland	UK	EU27
NACE Rev. 2 Category		GVA per head of working age population (€)				
A	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	822	689	219	221	-
B-E	Industry (excl. construction)	2,600	5,332	6,318	5,197	-
F	Construction	2,460	2,425	2,598	2,403	-
G-I	Wholesale, retail, transport, accomm., food services	6,016	6,223	5,913	6,458	-
J	Information and communication	682	521	1,255	2,121	-
K	Financial and insurance	822	564	2,993	3,491	-
L	Real estate	2,326	1,603	2,111	2,487	-
M-N	Professional, scientific, admin. and support	1,163	1,728	3,262	4,086	-
O-Q	Public admin., defence, education, health and social work	9,091	6,978	7,548	6,961	-
R-U	Arts, entertainment, recreation	548	938	988	1,150	-
Total		26,519	27,001	33,205	34,576	31,514

Source: Eurostat Database, Regional Statistics (Reg) Table [nama_r_e3vab95r2]

It will perhaps be helpful, in terms of building an initial impression of the character of the case study area to note its classification in some of the typologies, which have been developed within the ESPON programme. The most appropriate and informative classifications are the rural-urban typologies developed by Dijkstra and Poelman (2011) at DG Regio, and extended by the EDORA project (Copus et al., 2011). These classify the Western Isles as Predominantly Rural and Remote, 'consumption countryside' - reflecting access to natural areas, capacity for tourism and small scale, less commercial farming activity - and "below average" in terms of key economic performance indicators. The case study area is officially classified as sparsely populated, (Dijkstra and Poelman, 2011) and as an island area in which the major island has less than 50,000 inhabitants. An initial analysis of the 2011 Census for Scotland (NRS 2012a, p16) suggests that Scotland has one of the lower population densities of EU countries at 68 per square kilometre. In Scotland, the Western Isles and Highland had the lowest population density at nine per square kilometer, compared to 3,395 in Glasgow City (NRS, 2012a, p. 14).

According to the 2011 Census, the population of Scotland was 5,295,000, an increase of around five per cent since 2001. Overall there are more older dependents than children in the Scottish population. Since 2001, the number of children under five years of age had increased by six per cent. This contrasts with a decrease of two per cent in the 15 to 39 age group, a 14 per cent increase amongst the 40 to 60 year olds, and 11 per cent amongst those aged 65 and over (NRS, 2012a, p. 2-3). The population of the Western Isles, according to the 2011 Census was 27,700, a slight increase since 2001 (NRS, 2012b).

Twenty two per cent of the Western Isles population lives in very remote small towns and 78 per cent in very remote rural areas (see Figure 3; Scottish Government,

2012a Table 5.3). Stornoway with a population of around 5,660 is the only large town, and approximately 27 per cent the total population of the Western Isles live within what is called 'the Greater Stornoway area'. The rest of the population are scattered across over 280 townships (CnES, 2012b).

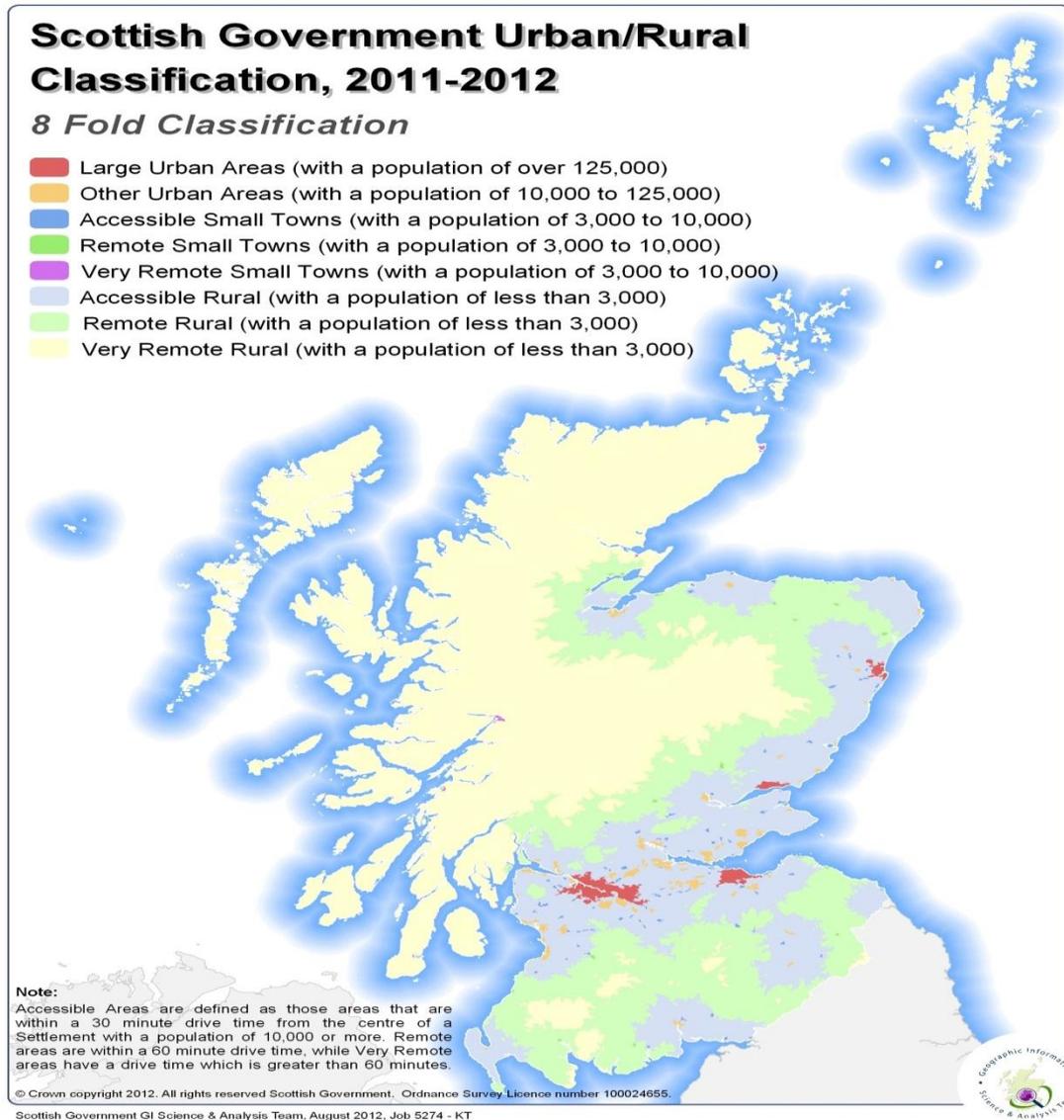


Figure 3: Scottish Government 6-fold Urban/Rural Classification, 2011-2012

Source: Scottish Government (2012 c)

3 Poverty and social exclusion in Scotland

3.1 Addressing poverty and social exclusion: Scottish policy context

Policies addressing poverty and social exclusion are shared across different levels of governments/governance: the UK and Scottish Governments, respectively, and Local Authorities. For example, policies regarding the State Welfare system, economy and taxation are the remit of the UK government, whilst the devolved Scottish Government has responsibility for issues such as education, housing and health services (see Annex 3 for further information). The Scottish Government's strategy for addressing poverty and exclusion is reflected in its National Performance Framework which sets out 15 objectives, 16 national outcomes and 50 indicators, and which all public bodies including Local Authorities are required to address and report on annually (Scottish Government, 2011a). Policies related to poverty and exclusion are located within the 'Social Solidarity' target and are discussed further in chapter 6. In addition to specific references to different groups at risk of poverty, including, more recently, older people (HARK network, 2011), there are also commitments to addressing inequalities between groups, improving economic activity rates between regions and improving public services (Scottish Government, 2011a; 2011b).

Recognising the challenges faced by public services in the context of the changing economic and public policy landscape, and in particular, the economic downturn and welfare reforms, as well as the consequences of an ageing society, the Scottish Government established the Christie Commission to produce a report on the 'Future Delivery of Public Services' in Scotland (Scottish Government, undated a). In the face of these challenges, the Commission argued the need for radical reform, if the government is to meet its social justice objectives, and in particular if it is to address the consequences of socio-economic inequalities and provide support for the vulnerable (Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services, 2011, p 16). Whilst recognising the contributions that older people make to society, the report also highlighted the additional demands that might be placed on public services as a result of an ageing population, which would require additional resources. The latter concerns are also reflected in a recent submission of the Western Isles Council to a Scottish Government inquiry on the impact of ageing on public services (CnES, 2012 a).

3.2 Poverty and social exclusion in rural Scotland

Obtaining accurate data on poverty and social exclusion at a local authority level and below in rural Scotland is a major challenge despite continuing efforts to improve the evidence base. In Scotland, the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is used to identify small area concentrations (i.e. data zones) of multiple deprivations by measuring a combination of 38 different indicators across seven domains (Scottish Government, undated b). These are: income, employment, health, education,

housing, access to services, and crime. Weighted indices combining variables within each of the domains are estimated, together with an overall deprivation index, which combines the scores from all seven domains. These indices are estimated for each of 6,505 “datazones” in Scotland. Profiles are also generated for each of the 32 local government areas in Scotland, and for various other administrative geographies. At the individual datazone level ranks are often reported rather than index values, and a common presentational device for larger areas is to estimate the share of datazones within a region which are in the top 15% (sextile) in terms of deprivation.

Although this is a relatively sophisticated set of indicators there are, as always, decisions to be made in terms of raw data sources and relative weighting of indicators. It is open to question whether, in the case of the SIMD such decisions have an impact upon the relative positions of rural and urban areas, or, to express it another way, whether the SIMD is less effective at capturing patterns of rural deprivation than urban ones. Indeed it has been argued that although very few areas in rural Scotland show geographical concentrations of multiple deprivation, this does not imply that rural deprivation does not exist (Bramley and Watkins, 2013; Hirsch et al., 2013; PolicyWeb, 2006). This issue will be discussed further in the context of the Western Isles below.

Data from the Scottish Household Survey (Scottish Executive Social Research, 2003) reported the following for remote rural areas in Scotland:

- Twenty two per cent of remote rural households had an income below the 60% median income which was the same as Scotland, but higher than accessible rural or small towns (p. 31).
- Twenty nine per cent pensioner households in remote rural areas had an annual net income of up to £6,000 compared to 25 per cent in Scotland (p30).
- Pensioner poverty rates were highest in remote rural areas with just over 50% being below the 60% median (p. 35). Whilst highlighting the limitations of sample size, the report suggested that there was a stronger relationship in rural areas between pensioner poverty and age, disability and housing tenure (p. 36).

A recent study found that:

“...households in remote rural Scotland require significantly higher incomes to attain the same minimum living standard as those living elsewhere in the UK. These high living costs threaten the sustainability of local communities by making it harder for people from a range of backgrounds and ages to live there at an acceptable standard.” (Hirsch et al., 2013, p. iv)

The study revealed that the minimum income households need to achieve an acceptable standard of living in remote rural and island communities such as the Western Isles is well above (around 10% to 40%) that required in the rest of the UK (Hirsch et al., 2013). Costs varied across household type and area. For example: costs were higher for single person households, households supporting children and pensioner households in the remote islands. Three main sources of extra costs which varied in significance by household were identified:

- Higher prices charged for food, clothes and household goods;
- Higher household fuel bills, affected by climate and sources of fuel ;

- Longer distances people have to travel routinely and commuting to work in particular.

Fuel poverty, access to services and costs of goods and services are three factors that are identified consistently by the literature on poverty and social exclusion in rural communities in Scotland. The Hirsch et al study identified domestic fuel costs in remote rural areas in particular as being an important source of difference in relation to costs compared to other parts of the UK (see Hirsch et al., 2013). The difference in costs is attributed to a combination of factors: being in off grid areas; severe climate; and lack of appropriate accommodation for smaller households (Hirsch et al 2013; Bevan and Croucher, 2008). Furthermore, Scottish Government evidence (2012b, p. 36) also reveals that housing stock in rural Scotland is generally less energy efficient than in the rest of Scotland with 19% of households in remote rural Scotland falling into the poor energy efficiency category in contrast with 7% in accessible rural areas and 1% in the rest of Scotland. This difference is also reflected in the proportion of households in remote rural Scotland categorised as 'extreme fuel poor', 18% compared to 12% in accessible rural areas and 7% in the rest of Scotland.

Access to services is one of the main SIMD domains in which remote rural areas show the greatest social exclusion. This includes access to services such as education, health, finance, retail, petrol and so on. The disparity between remote rural areas and the rest of Scotland with regard to access to services is compounded by fuel costs and lack of proximity to public transport facilities (Scottish Government, 2012b, p. 4). A Scottish Government report (2012b, p. 19) on rural Scotland noted that 'remote rural areas are the only areas in Scotland which are not within a 15 minute drive time to key services.' For example, 69 per cent of people in remote rural areas live within a 15 minute drive time to a shopping centre, compared to a 100 per cent of people in the rest of Scotland. Car fuel costs are higher in remote rural areas (58 per cent) and Accessible Rural areas (64 per cent) than for the rest of Scottish households due to longer driving distances to key services (Scottish Government, 2012b, p. 27).

More recently the Minimum Income Study for Remote Rural Scotland also highlighted the additional costs incurred by some remote rural households on transport (i.e. fuel and ferry costs in particular) in relation to, for example, travel for work, shopping and accessing services (Hirsch et al., 2013) . However, it is not only about costs , as not being able to afford or access transport can also lead to social isolation, constraints in exercising choices about where to shop and social exclusion from a wide variety of activities and services. Although there have been some fiscal measures and actions taken to address fuel costs in remote rural areas, for instance the five pence per litre fuel duty introduced in 2011 (HMRC, 2011), it is difficult to ascertain if this has been passed to customers by the retailers (OFT, 2012).

In addition to direct costs (e.g. paying for fuel) incurred by households, indirect costs such as higher haulage costs have been recognised as being passed on to consumers through higher prices for consumer goods including food (OFT, 2012).

The Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) Scheme¹ pilot in 2008 which included commercial vehicles (CVs) until 2012 was introduced as a measure to address the additional transport costs in 'fragile communities'. However, the impact of the removal of the RET for CVs in 2012, on households and goods is difficult to assess.

With regard to retail costs (food and household goods), Hirsch et al. (2013) identified these as highest for households (and pensioners in particular) in the most remote island communities. The premium paid for food and household goods by households in remote and rural communities was also recognised in an Office for Fair Trading (OFT) report (2012). The report highlighted the lack of choices related to delivery companies and the extra premiums charged by some companies for delivering to remote and rural communities. In addition pensioner households face particular challenges as they are less likely to buy on line, which is often cheaper than buying through other means, such as through catalogues (see Hirsch et al., 2013).

3.3 Poverty and social exclusion in the Western Isles

The Western Isles is recognised as facing a number of challenges given its geographical location and demographic trends. Issues such as access to services given its low population density, fuel poverty, lower economic activity rates and low average gross weekly income combine to create particular challenges in a context where the overall opportunities for economic development may be limited. A long-standing process of population decline, driven by selective outmigration of younger and economically active people has left a legacy of an imbalanced age structure which is projected to continue.

High fuel costs and transportation costs impacts on the cost living of those living in remote rural areas. For example, it was estimated that food was 15% more expensive and fuel 12% more expensive in the Western Isles than Scotland as a whole (NHS, Western Isles, undated, p. 1; see also Hirsch et al., 2013). In addition, in 2010 fuel poverty was estimated to affect approximately 55% of households in the Western Isles. The following groups are considered to be at most risk: Old people-those living on their own in particular; lone parents; disabled people; and large households where adult members are either unemployed or working on a low income (The Energy Advisory Service, 2006, p. 9). As can be observed from Table 3, the Western Isles show a prevalence of lower economic activity rates and a slightly higher unemployment rate compared to the Highlands and Scotland as a whole (see also Hall Aitken, 2007; NRS 2012).

¹ 'The Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) scheme involves setting ferry fares on the basis of the cost of travelling an equivalent distance by road.' - See more at: <http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/water/ferries>

Table 3: Demographic and labour market characteristics

	Western Isles	Highlands and Islands	Scotland	UK	EU27
Population density (2009)¹	8.6	11.3	66.6	254.2	116.4
% aged <15 (2010)²	15.86	16.15	16.34	17.47	15.62
% aged 65+ (2010)²	23.71	21.43	18.46	18.10	19.12
Economic Activity Rate (2011-12)³	(75.4)	*(82.5) 62.03	(77.1) 62.50	(76.6) 62.44	57.59
Unemployment rate (2011-12)	(7.1)	*(4.7)6.9	(8.0) 7.9	(8.1) 8.0	9.6
Employment Rate	(67.5.)	*(80.0) 57.9	(70.9) 57.5	(70.3) 57.4	52.0

Sources:

1. Eurostat Database, Regional Statistics (Reg) Table [demo_r_d3dens]
2. Eurostat Database, Regional Statistics (Reg) Table [demo_r_pjanaggr3]
3. *NOMIS (see note)*, and Eurostat Database, Regional Statistics (Reg) Table [lfst_r_lfp2acrtt]
4. *NOMIS (see note)*, and Eurostat Database, Regional Statistics (Reg) Table [lfst_r_lfu3rt]
5. *NOMIS (see note)*, and Eurostat Database, Regional Statistics (Reg) Table [lfst_r_lfe2emprt]

* Highland only

Note: Figures derived from the National Online Manpower Information System (NOMIS) Local Authority Profile database (<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/contents.aspx>) (<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/2038432137/report.aspx#tabempunemp>) (<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/2038432126/report.aspx#tabempunemp>) and are shown in brackets. Economic activity, employment and unemployment rates from the NOMIS database relate to the population aged 16-64, whilst those from Eurostat relate to the entire population over the age of 15 (16 in the UK). The NOMIS figures in the UK column relate to GB rather than UK.

Overall figures for GDP indicators and disposable income per head (Highlands and Islands which includes the Western Isles) and average gross weekly pay is low compared to Scotland as a whole (Tables 4 and 5 below).

Table 4: GDP indicators and disposable income per head

	Western Isles	Highlands and Islands	Scotland	UK	EU27
PPS (€'m)¹	496	8,865	131,109	1,606,066	11,751,419
PPS per Capita¹	18,900	19,800	25,200	26,000	23,500
% of EU 27 Average¹	81	84	107	111	100
Disposable Income per Head (PPS) 2009²	n/a	15,867	16,644	17,020	n/a

Sources:

1. Eurostat Database, Regional Statistics (Reg) Table [nama_r_e3gdp];
2. Eurostat Database, Regional Statistics (Reg) Table [nama_r_ehh2inc]

Overall figures for those claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) in the Western Isles are low in comparison to the rest of the Scotland and Great Britain, there are more JSA claimants in the 50-64 age groups and more people over 60 years of age claiming pension credits, reflecting the demographics described above (Table 5).

Table 5: National indicators of poverty and social exclusion

	Western Isles	Scotland	GB
Average Gross Weekly Pay (£) 2011¹	446.10	490.6	503.1
% claiming Job Seekers Allowance July 2012¹	3.4	4.3	3.8
% aged 50-64 claiming JSA July 2012¹	3.1	2.2	2.2
% of persons >60 claiming pension credits²	22.6	16.5	n/a

Sources:

1. NOMIS Local Authority Profile database (<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/contents.aspx>).
2. Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics(<http://www.sns.gov.uk/Reports/AreaProfile.aspx>)

In terms of the overall SIMD indicator, the Western Isles does not appear to be very deprived. None of its 36 datazones are within the top 15% in Scotland. A number of the individual domains (especially income, employment, education, housing and crime) also suggest that the islands not particularly deprived. These findings do not accord very well with subjective impressions, or with local knowledge, and perhaps can best be understood in terms of the known characteristics of the raw data variables employed by the SIMD. For example in the Income domain the source is not based directly upon data on income, but upon administrative records of income-related social benefit payments. This raises questions about low claim rates typical of remote rural areas, and the issues of underemployment, 'hidden unemployment' seasonality, and so on. The way in which the SIMD treats income as a component of deprivation also takes no account of the substantial difference in cost of living between urban or accessible rural localities and sparsely populated and remote areas such as the Western Isles. These are highlighted by the Minimum Income Study (Hirsch et al., 2013). Arguably such living cost differentials are at least as important as those associated with inner city housing costs, which it is argued should be included in the estimation of at risk of poverty rates. It is not inconceivable that taking account of the substantial disparity in living costs between the Western Isles and accessible areas of Scotland could result in the Islands moving up the SIMD ranking.

The suspicion that the SIMD underestimates the level of income deprivation in the Western Isles is reinforced by a recent analysis, which uses an area based regression modelling approach (similar in many respects to the World Bank PovMap procedure implemented in the context of this project) by Bramley and Watkins (2013). According to this analysis (p. 22) the Western Isles' median net equivalised household income (before housing costs) in 2008/9 was the third lowest of all the Council Areas in Scotland. In terms of their estimate of At Risk of Poverty (ARoP) rate, (p26) the Western Isles ranked sixth, at 21.6%. Similarly, according to the estimates carried out using the World Bank PovMap methodology in the TiPSE project, the Western Isles had the third highest ARoP rate (both before and after housing cost).

Access to services - advice and information, employment opportunities, education and training and so on - is a key underpinning issue affecting all aspects of life in rural areas. It can exacerbate and add levels of complexities to individual needs which may be harder to identify in rural areas and even if identified it may be difficult to meet due to higher service delivery costs (NHS Western Isles, undated). Access to

services is therefore one of the main domains in which remote rural areas tend to show the greatest social exclusion.

The SIMD 'Access to Services' score is composed of travel-time measurements for both private cars and public transport. The services for which travel times are estimated are general practitioners (local National Health Service doctors), petrol stations, post offices, primary and secondary schools, and 'retail centres'. Overall (combining both car and public transport indices) the Western Isles is by far the most "access deprived" local authority area in Scotland. 30 of its 36 datazones are in the most deprived sextile in Scotland.

However the results for public and private transport show an interesting difference. In terms of public transport access to services the Western Isles retains the "top spot" and are substantially more "deprived" than the other Island groups (Orkney and Shetland) and mainland Highland. However in terms of car-based travel times, only 4 of the Western Isles datazones fall in the top (most deprived) sextile. This places the Western Isles roughly on the same level as a number of mainland rural areas, such as Moray, or Scottish Borders, and rather less deprived than the "leaders", Aberdeenshire and Highland. The explanation probably lies in the fact that the Western Isles are rather smaller, and distances between settlements are moderate compared with the most deprived mainland areas. What is made very clear by the comparison is that the Western Isles access to services deprivation is very much 'driven' by the extreme inadequacy of its public transport provision.

4 Factors and processes shaping poverty and social exclusion in the Western Isles

4.1 Introduction

An analysis of the interviews combined with a review of relevant research and literature suggests five interrelated factors operating at and across different levels (i.e. national, regional, local and household/individual) and domains (i.e. economic, social/cultural political and biographical). These are discussed in this chapter in turn:

- Remoteness and sparsity
- Demographic trends
- Economic crisis and welfare provision
- Social /cultural factors
- Leadership and voice

4.2 Remoteness and sparsity

The challenges arising from the location and geography of the Western Isles (discussed in more detail in the introduction) were taken for granted by all interviewees. Remoteness in relation to the geographical location of the Western Isles as well being a collection of Islands and sparsity (population size and dispersed population) were closely associated with difficulties in accessing services, high costs of living combined with low levels of income related to labour market constraints and limited employment opportunities (EKOS, 2009; Hirsch et al., 2013).

Accessing Services

Equity in accessing services across the Island was identified as a challenge and experiences varied depending on where one lived: the further away from Stornoway the greater the challenges. The increasing centralisation of some services in Stornoway and poor access to public transport were identified as significant in shaping poverty and social exclusion for some communities and households:

“You know Stornoway is very compact and small, most services are centralised here. In Barra, there are council offices and there is a kind of day hospital type thing. So there are services down there, ... but somewhere like Uist is actually quite long, so if you live in North Uist, Baile Mhanach is in the middle and you can't get to it... If you are elderly or disabled, you wouldn't be able to, the buses are fairly irregular. So I think definitely you have that, there are issues because we are an island and we don't get the same services that you would if you lived in Inverness even, never mind London or Glasgow. But

if you lived in Stornoway you do get more access to services than if you live in Carloway or Uist or Ness.” (Interview 3, Western Isles)²

Access to transport not only added to costs especially if this meant that people have to have cars to commute long distances to work (see for example Hirsch et al., 2013), but raised important issues which have a bearing on social exclusion. Accessibility (the extent to which employment, goods, services are within reach) and in particular the idea that 'A place is not just 'more' or 'less' accessible, but accessible relative to people in all their different circumstances' (Farrington, 2007, p320) including their spatial location is an important aspect of social justice. In this context being in a position to get to services or employment and to participate in activities that are seen as the 'norm' is an important aspect of social inclusion (see also Farrington & Farrington, 2005; Velaga et al., 2012)). Stakeholders cited a number of examples where individuals because of their location and circumstances (e.g. disability, low income and lack of access to regular public transport) were unable to reach or access the services they required.

Those relying on public transport to get to and from work also experienced some major problems such as getting to work on time and having to leave early. Unless employers were willing to be flexible accessing employment for those reliant on public transport was cited as a problem. Where community transport has been provided, this was under threat due to pressures to reduce public expenditure. The most vulnerable to cuts are services that are discretionary (i.e. non-statutory services) and those most likely to be affected are those living in the most remote areas of the Islands, increasing isolation:

“But getting somebody to their hospital appointment or getting to pick up their prescription, they are not statutory and unfortunately community transport budgets are on consultation to potentially be cut. I think for somewhere like Stornoway it would be hard, because I think it is a valued thing, but it wouldn't be the end of the world. Somewhere like Uist, it is dire. If you cut the community transport because the bus kind of goes once a day, people are going to become very, very isolated and unable to access services of any description.” (Interview 3, Western Isles)

The risk of poverty and social exclusion are compounded for those who are not in employment and seeking work, especially if they live outside the Stornoway area and have to incur additional travel costs:

“You know the thing about universal credit coming is there is going to be the expectation that somebody is going to spend more than 30 hours a week looking for work, right. So you are going to need to access the internet, because you are going to need to prove what you have been up to on the portal looking for jobs. You might have to come into Stornoway come in a number of times. You know you are going to have to use the bus to pay for it.” (Interview 5.1, Western Isles)

² Stakeholder quotes used in this report have not been attributed to specific individuals or post holders to preserve anonymity, numbers have been allocated instead.

Whilst access to public transport for people living in Lewis and Stornoway was identified as better than other areas across the Western Isles there were no bus services after six in the evening because it was assumed that fewer people would be using the services. However, it was felt that this approach to providing services was based on an urban model focusing on economies of scale which was inappropriate to remote rural communities. The importance of embedding the social justice aspects of accessibility was emphasised as important if poverty and social exclusion was too addressed:

“You know we really should be talking about the people who use them about the difference it makes to their lives for the fact that there is a bus service. You can’t just say if somebody wants to work then they have to move from Ness Point to town. There isn’t accommodation and people wouldn’t necessarily want to or whatever. But you know you wouldn’t be able to work a shift, you wouldn’t be able to work in Tesco’s because you wouldn’t be able to get back to Ness after 6. You wouldn’t be able to work in the hospital because of the shift patterns. And I think there is this presumption that everybody has got a car. It is this debate about what a rural bus service is for and expectation of the number of people travelling is compared to what is happening in Glasgow. In Glasgow you expect people to be packed in the bus.” (Interview 5.2, Western Isles)

Costs of living

Minimum Income Standard

On the issue of living costs, a recent study on remote rural Scotland estimated that the minimum income for 'an acceptable standard of living' required by households living in remote places such as the Western Isles was well above what is needed in the rest of the UK. The minimum living costs of a working age household living in Stornoway were estimated to be around 30 per cent than that of a household in a city and 25 per cent more for pensioner households (Hirsch et al., 2013). This discrepancy in costs was consistently highlighted by stakeholders:

“... have just moved from here down to the (*South of England*- My italics) . They can’t get over how much cheaper the shopping is in the South of England, the petrol is. Everything is. You know you need a curtain rail for your house, you are probably paying £20 more up here than you are there ... there is lots of things out there, you can wait for the sales.” (Interview 5.1, Western Isles)

A number of factors have been identified, by Hirsch et al (2013) and stakeholders as driving the living costs in the Western Isles up.

Changes in welfare benefits

Most stakeholders consistently highlighted how the experience of poverty and social exclusion was compounded by the interaction of a number of different factors (e.g. costs of food, phone bills etc.) as well as changes in welfare benefits(discussed

below). These factors combined to limit individual's ability to manoeuvre and cope with unexpected expenditure:

“Well additional costs, primarily heating one’s home. Electricity, well I see, one of the things I was looking at before I came here was an application for a discretionary housing payment. Now these are top ups of existing housing benefit to help somebody stay in their home. And the person had listed that they had phone costs, they had food costs, and looking at the food costs, I know from doing weekly food shops that it is not an unrealistic figure they have given me...and any movement within that, supposing you need a pair of shoes that week there is no way you can kind of sustain any change. So that is very difficult.” (Interview 1, Western Isles)

The lack of manoeuvrability to address unexpected or additional expenditure is also recognised by a recent review of welfare reform and financial exclusion in Scotland (The Poverty Alliance, no date). Research undertaken by Consumer Focus (2011) reported that a high proportion of home credit (e.g. payday loans, loan sharks, catalogue credit, etc.) users said they would not find it possible to save money to cope with unexpected circumstances or for a special purpose. The lack of access to basic banking services and credit for those on low income in particular has received ongoing attention. Most of those on low income don't believe they can access 'mainstream lenders'.

Although there is a Scottish Welfare Fund - for those in crisis or those in need of support to live independently rather than in institutional care, - which is administered through Local Authorities since April 2013, it is difficult to assess its use by those in poverty (see Scottish Government, 2013 for further information). A review undertaken in 2011 of the Social Fund prior to the recent reforms suggested that in addition to problems in administering the funds and issues related to eligibility there was a dearth of information on the beneficiaries as well as the benefits to the users. Older people were identified as having a low take up rate. Amongst the groups who were eligible to apply for the fund, awareness of the fund was varied ' with the most vulnerable of such individuals least likely to be aware of the scheme' (Grant, 2011, p. ii).

Fuel and transport

Higher heating costs due to the non-availability of mains gas, climatic factors and condition of housing stock was identified as a major challenge. The cost of fuel and geographical distances from the main town of Stornoway were also highlighted by stakeholders as impacting on transportation costs which in turn affected the price and quality (in terms of freshness) of food, and the cost of household goods:

“...there are two supermarkets here, look at Tesco and the Coop, and every week the prices are going up and it is not by one or two pence, it is by 10, 20, 30 pence. But it is worse in outlying areas, because the further you go away from Stornoway. Of course the smaller shops have got to hike up their prices to make a profit. There are still a few mobile grocery vans on the go. But even

reaching out from Stornoway to all up in the north or down to the south, the further you go...the less accessible it is.” (Interview 1, Western Isles)

The demand for food banks has been growing as a result of the economic crisis, changes in welfare benefits and high food costs across the UK (BBC, 2013). The Western Isles is no exception which most stakeholders said was unheard of:

“People going for a food parcel, this was unheard of in the Western Isles, but it is a sad fact of life that there is such extreme poverty in some cases in the Western Isles that people are struggling to feed their families. Where there are low wages, everything else is going up round about you. Food has gone up, fuel hasn't gone up, wages haven't gone up, benefits haven't really gone up, and people are just finding it harder and harder to manage.” (Interview 1, Western Isles)

Closure of post offices

The closure of post offices and their impact on rural communities has been of ongoing concern. The importance of the post office in remote rural communities in particular as a 'hub', as well as a provider of access to a range of services and advice to those constrained in their use of other services, because of their location, income or physical ability was identified as vital in a study undertaken by Hilton (2005). Additional costs incurred such as postage and delivery costs due to location were also identified as an issue affecting costs of living and providing services:

“And also the other thing, I think that has had a huge impact on the cost that the post office charges. Again rural areas are disproportionately affected by that. I mean if you try and buy anything on eBay or whatever it is.” (Interview 5.2, Western Isles)

Care costs were also affected:

“A care home in ...were telling us that they need to order this book with all the drugs in it, and they ordered it and it cost, I don't know, it cost £20 this book and then £25 delivery to We were in a conversation about why they had to charge for extra care within the contract rate, ... it is just things like that, it is just little things like that all the time.” (Interview 5.1, Western Isles)

Some companies may not deliver goods to the Western Isles which may necessitate a visit to the mainland, thus incurring extra costs:

“Some won't even deliver here, so you can't even access goods. If you order from Inverness it has to come via the couriers. So you have limitations about people's ability to shop around.” (Interview 5.1, Western Isles)

Interviewees also highlighted the closure of local shops and post offices combined with lack of public transport as having an additional impact on older people and those who are less mobile by removing locally accessible public/social spaces for socialising and accessing services:

“Local post office closing down. That is very prevalent here. The village I am staying in (...) is just a mile outside Stornoway. There were two post offices in it when I first started going there, now there are none. And the nearest post office is now in Stornoway itself. There are no post offices now between Stornoway and [...], none at all. And there used to be a number of them. And there were little village shops, they are not there anymore either. But the local shops were a great boon, and they were the centre of conversation.” (Interview 6, Western Isles)

Labour market

Overall both research and the stakeholders consistently flagged up the lack of job opportunities and the impact on youth, particularly leading to their out-migration: 'our biggest export is our youngsters, our educated youngsters, are our biggest export I would say.' (Interview 6, Western Isles). The absence of good quality work impacted on the ability of individuals to exercise choice about remaining on the Island which was contrasted with those living on the mainland:

“Situation of jobs in Western Isles is pretty fragile, it is pretty weak. But you know sometimes these headline employment rates may not be that stark or out of kilter with the rest of the country, but what you have is population movements. So if people don't have a job, they move and they go. So whereas in mainland scenario the people would just go into another local authority or just get a job down the road, that is not available, that is not really an option. Although some people do commute in terms of the oil industry or you know. But that is pretty rare, it is not rare, but it is limited.” (Interview 2, Western Isles)

The opportunities for education and training were recognised as improving through the establishment of the University of the Highlands Islands and the ongoing development of vocational training. However, the lack of skilled and well-paid jobs to go to for those that were trained was identified as deeply problematic:

“... there is quite a lot of support around skills and training but if there is no job to go to at the end, you can be as trained as you like and there is nothing to go to. And £50 a week or whatever they get is a tiny amount of money and doesn't pay for them to live independently.” (Interview 3, Western Isles)

The issue of training keeping up with changing trends that addresses the needs of the Islands in the future was also identified as something that requires to be addressed:

“Another example is of providing training for childcare in terms of trends, it is not great but there is nothing for training for care of the elderly. They are training hairdressers but not for renewables.” (Interview 2, Western Isles)

The majority of the Western Isles economic activity is focused on a few sectors with a high level of dependence on the public sector and limited private sector investment. Based on the 2001 census, approximately 32% of the workforce was employed in the public sector. Other sectors of employment that were of importance to the Western Isles economy were: fishing (6%); construction (11%); and transport (8%). The difference between the Western Isles and the rest of Scotland was especially marked in the fishing industry, construction and the public sector where the national

proportions were much lower at 0.3%, 7%; and 27%, respectively (CnES, undated a). It is difficult to say the extent to which the figures for the Western Isles have been impacted upon by the closure of the oil fabrication yard, the economic crisis and its impact on the construction industry and cuts in public services. However most interviewees identified the labour market situation as being exacerbated by the seasonal nature of employment:

“Seasonal employment here will be some of that, I think certainly tourism, fishing. Certainly the Harris Tweed is cyclical and its nature, although it is in an awkward trend at the moment. And you know construction industry is very dependent on public sector, which is being squeezed very severely at the moment, which is all reductions. So that area is poor, and it is also one of these ones where people are, you know have skills which are readily transferable and when people can then they move.” (Interview 3, Western Isles)

Fluctuation in earnings due to seasonal work combined with difficulties in accessing benefits due to variability in employment can compound some of the challenges experienced:

“Fluctuation in earning is a huge issue, a huge issue, because again people manage to secure employment but the employment can vary from week to week, and that makes it very difficult for people to budget. And it is also difficult to determine what benefits people should be on. So again people become afraid of both the benefit system, but also of becoming employed. There is no incentive, and again if you are living in a rural area, but you are being employed in here (Stornoway- My italics), but I am saying “well I am only wanting you for 10 hours this week. I’ll take you for 30 hours next week. The cost of getting here is difficult for people to be able to manage.” (Interview 5.2, Western Isles)

4.2 Demographic trends and their impact

Population projections to 2035 for the Western Isles estimate a declining population; around a 11% decline in population from 26,190 in 2010 to 23,623 by 2035 which is estimated to be the second largest percentage decline in Scotland largely due to deaths outweighing births. In addition during the period 2010-2035 the Western Isles is predicted to experience the second largest decline at around just under -20% of those of working age and a 22.5% increase to those of pensionable age (CnES, undated d). In 2010 the dependency ratio was 62.84 compared to the Scottish average of 52.21 presenting specific challenges for service provision related to social care and health services in particular (Finance Committee CnES, 2010, p. 1).

Almost all of those interviewed acknowledged that demographic trends with regard to the Western Isles revealed an ageing population, declining fertility rates and high levels of youth outmigration. Together these trends were recognised as posing specific challenges for the Island and its communities:

“But I think the biggest challenge demographically, is that imbalance between the old and the young. You know there is some very scary statistics around, if

we carry on going down the direction we are going without anything at all changing, is that we won't have enough people to look after all the old people, and...where does that kind of leave you? You will just be an island of retired people and that doesn't make an economy. For us it is a huge challenge going forward because of our demographic." (Interview 6, Western Isles)

Some interviewees were concerned that this imbalance had potentially negative consequences for the provision of services, such as housing and care for the elderly as discussed in chapter 5. The interaction of demographic trends with other factors such as access to appropriate employment and the economic crisis was highlighted as leading to further youth outmigration (discussed above) as well as increasing the risk of poverty and social exclusion amongst a range of groups:

"Demography, an ageing population, plus the fact that we don't have enough young people to look after them, that is an issue. And the reason we don't have enough young people here is because our young people go away to find employment, so employment is a big issue here." (Interview 6, Western Isles)

The question of what should be done to address the demographic trends and its impact raised a number of conflicting issues which were recognised as not having easy solutions:

"...that is a difficult one because you don't want young people not to leave, they need to experience life and such like, but there isn't the replacement families coming in of a similar age. ...there aren't enough of jobs at a certain level to attract kind of 20+ people to come and settle here. And I think increasingly with reducing the number of jobs within the public sector, and nothing being replaced in terms of private sector jobs, you will increasingly see that population, kind of 50 down to 20 really reducing. I mean it is interesting, people who were born here or you know have family, often say they want to come back, but they aren't able to come back until they are in their kind of 40s, and perhaps have a bit of money behind them." (Interview 3, Western Isles)

There were some concerns expressed at the lack of strategic leadership in planning a way forward. Should there be a strategy for managing decline or should there be a more proactive attempt at arresting these trends? Issues which are not easily resolved without debate and strategic leadership and direction, and which some saw as something that was lacking:

"And there is more of a debate to be had about these trends, do we just follow these trends and go into a cycle of managed decline? Which is pretty much let's do more of the same, or surely we should be arresting these trends, and that is what the whole focus should be on. So there is a danger to going down that road, saying oh that is just the way things are. So let's just plan for older people and shut schools, and spend more on education and more on older care, which is a self-fulfilling prophecy. I don't think there is enough of that [discussion- my italics], although you get people saying yeah we have these trends, but there isn't any sense of crisis." (Interview 2, Western Isles)

Despite these concerns there was some evidence to suggest that initiatives were being developed to address some of the demographic challenges, discussed further in chapter 6.

4.3 Economic climate and changes in the state welfare provision

The impact of the economic climate and the financial crisis in particular was identified as a key factor leading to a cycle of decline:

“So even though we are having to make cuts now, the real full impact of that won’t hit. ...there are always rumours about this shutting or that is shutting and though it doesn’t sound like a huge amount of jobs, actually losing 25 jobs here is massive... and then that has a knock on effect, because you don’t have money going back into the economy and more businesses begin to shut and that cyclical thing.” (Interview 3, Western Isles)

“If a 100 people here are unemployed that means a significant amount of your population aren’t spending money, which then affects 1000 people. It is that real problem that I don’t think statistics can ever show, which I think is the hard thing.” (Interview 1, Western Isles)

Reduced public expenditure at the national and regional/local levels, respectively was identified as leading to a negative impact on services (reduction and centralisation), on individuals (increased debt, lack of employment etc.) and on the state welfare provision:

“I think the Welfare Reform just now is very, very, is really scary because I do see there is going to be a lot of problem. I think they have underestimated the demand there will be for food, for a food bank. I never thought I would see a food bank here, but unfortunately there is. So I think that has a lot to do with the work. The work situation is dire...It is a bad sign when even the pubs are closing. It is quite a bad sign. The fishing industry, there is hardly a fisherman anymore.” (Interview 1, Western Isles)

The impact of the financial crisis and uncertainties around recovery has also been recognised by the Scottish Government as exacerbating the situation of those who are already vulnerable: For example those on low incomes, the disabled, unskilled, those unemployed, ethnic minorities, women and so on (Communities Analytical Services and Scotcen, 2011). Significant changes to the welfare system have been introduced by the UK Welfare Reform Act 2012 and the Pensions Act 2011 and the increasing emphasis on accessing benefits on line was predicted to impact adversely on those who don’t have access to basic banking services and those who are digitally excluded (The Poverty Alliance, not dated). The trend towards borrowing from private loan companies was identified as growing. The issue of lack of access to loans from banks based on age and other criteria was also identified as leading individuals to borrow from loan companies where the charges are higher:

“Someone who was over 80 years of age and solvent, and had plenty of money to make the repayments, but was financially excluded because of age and nobody would lend her the money.” (Interview 1, Western Isles)

Although welfare is a reserved matter for the UK Government, the following measures impact on the devolved services delivered by the Scottish Government and local authorities : Health, Social Care and Housing, and the Scottish government has taken a number of measures to mitigate the impacts of the Welfare reforms(see the Scottish Government Website for further details on Welfare reforms and mitigation measures: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/people/welfarereform>) . A Scottish Government report estimates that the UK Government will have reduced the Scottish Welfare bill by over £4.5 billion and by around £47 billion in the UK between 2010 and 2014/15 (Scottish Government 2013). Although the precise impact of these reforms is not yet fully known, in the Western Isles most stakeholders identified a number of cases highlighting the negative impact of different welfare changes on individuals and households:

“Let me give you an example ... Let’s take a 24 year old young person. They are signing on, they can’t get a job, they are getting Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), they get £54 a week JSA, £5 of that, even with the 25% single person discount, they would probably have to pay in the region of £5 a week towards their charges. That is £49 a week, to rent, okay they will get their rent paid, but to heat their house, flat, to buy food, have a phone, just everything goes with running on £49 a week. Bank loans. Something has got to give. I mean what is £49 a week nowadays?” (Interview 1, Western Isles)

Welfare reforms were noted as exacerbating poverty and social exclusion given the constraints arising from the remote location of the Western Isles:

- The requirements related to accessing Job Seeker Allowance and the difficulties arising from living in remote areas with regard to job availability (discussed above)
- Changes in disability benefits: individuals who were previously assessed as requiring care and were entitled to disability and carers allowance are being reassessed and deemed suitable for work which means a reduction in household income exacerbated by lack of prospects of finding suitable work locally.
- The implementation of the 'bedroom tax ' (this will reduce the amount of benefit that people can claim get if they are deemed to have a spare bedroom in their council or housing association home) was dreaded due to the fact that households would be penalised in a context where there is a lack of housing choices :

“I am dreading when they are going to come out with the room tax, this new room tax. Because we don’t have any one bedroom accommodation, so what they are going to be doing about his, I just don’t know. And people can’t afford to pay extra for a room they have lying empty.” (Interview 7, Western Isles)

- The bedroom tax is also likely to have other impacts. For example mismatch between housing stock available and need given the lack of accommodation with one or two bedrooms and the disincentive to move into bigger homes, leaving a bigger gap in housing choice and availability. In addition the change of payment

of housing benefit directly to the tenants rather than to the landlords as at present was also identified as leading to potential problems for housing providers :

“The elements, the major issue for us is terms of universal credit where money is paid in directly to tenants, at the moment it is paid directly to us, the rent element is paid directly to us, so we have certainty of our income by and large. What we will then have is a much more volatile income stream, and a less predictable cash flow which will increase our costs. We have more transactions so there are more banking charges. So there are real business threats to us in that sense and in terms of individuals.” (Interview 2, Western Isles)

The difficulties of meeting the requirements for accessing work related benefits due to lack of employment opportunities locally was also identified as likely to have a significant impact on households:

“Up until April, couples with children only had to work 16 hours a week to get Working Tax Credits, it is now 24 hours a week. And we have seen some employers here; they are only giving 21 hours a week, just below threshold, so that is difficult.” (Interview 1, Western Isles)

Debt and financial exclusion were also recurring themes:

“There are quite a number of people we would say who are financially excluded, because of either their existing commitments, not maintaining them. We see a lot of people in difficult circumstances, relationship break ups and one partner has gone bankrupt because of debts which the other partner is not willing to address. So there is a whole raft of situations.” (Interview 1, Western Isles)

4.4 Social and cultural factors

The Western Isles is identified as having a distinctive culture based on a combination of factors:

“The high levels of strictly observed religiosity have been maintained by a combination of features: the background and culture of the island residents, remoteness from the mainland offering insurance against change, the close-knit nature of the community and, until recently a low level of geographical mobility. (Chaplin 2010, p. 95)

The positive aspects – such as social support, values of mutual respect, social cohesion – as well as the negative aspects – social control, judgemental attitudes, polarising and divisiveness of religious influence -was recognised by the Chaplin study (2010) as well as the stakeholders interviewed:

“...the effects of religion, on a personal level and on a community level. The social control of the Presbyterian churches, which some people loved and got enormous support out of through family difficulties, and other people felt they were being told what to do by a prevailing environ.” (Interview 4, Western Isles)

The denial at times that poverty exists amongst some sections of the communities in the Western Isles was considered challenging. This lack of recognition was partly related to the lack of visibility of 'poor' people or the hidden nature of social exclusion because of the dispersed population:

“There is a definite view that there is no poverty on the islands. Because you don't have the big schemes, you can't see a high rise block, areas aren't no go areas, and in the same way that you would get in any town or city. I think because it is very hidden.” (Interview 3, Western Isles)

But it was also attributed to feelings of pride amongst members of the Island communities, and to fears of stigmatisation arising from cultural/social attitudes related to work ethics (see above) some of which were religious in origin (see Chaplin, 2010) :

“I also think there is a lot of pride here. I think that is true of rural communities but I think particularly here. It is something that people just don't want to talk about.” (Interview 3, Western Isles)

“Denial, I think is alive and well on a lot fronts. “We don't have poverty here, that is in Drumchapel.” I think there is a bit of that. There was also a degree of hostility to it. It was self-inflicted or...you know well you can pull yourself. Which is the Presbyterian model again influencing. So I think it feeds into it somewhere, somehow.” (Interview 7, Western Isles)

On the one hand, stakeholders were at pains to highlight the important role that families and networks based on a variety of factors including religion played in providing social support and respect for the elderly and so on, On the other hand, there was a recognition that things were changing:

“I think that one of the biggest differences that people will have noticed from now to 10 years ago, is that shift of family being next door is beginning to affect these islands as well. And also the number of people that are coming to live here who don't necessarily have family here. So I think maybe in the past when people were struggling, people next door or maybe the family helped, and obviously that is not so much the case, people moving away, new people moving in. You get a different dynamic. And not that people don't want to be neighbourly, but you don't look after your neighbours in the same way you look after your brother, your family. So I think that is one of the biggest differences.” (Interview 3, Western Isles)

4.5 Leadership and partnership working

The importance of having good working relationships between agencies as well as having strategic leadership in developing appropriate policies and practices related to addressing poverty and social exclusion was identified as critical:

“Whether that is education, social work, police, housing, health, in its various guises. All being involved with the same households, but in a disjointed, or sometimes even doing contradictory thing. You know, so these are big issues it

all goes back to joining these things up and having people who have the vision and the willingness and the drive to make things happen. You absolutely need the key individuals as well though to drive it, that is fundamental.” (Interview 2, Western Isles)

Limited representation of women and people of younger age in elected positions in the local authority was identified as a weakness. Overall leadership and vision especially with regard to addressing poverty and social exclusion was identified as lacking:

“.... real lack of drive and leadership...and where there is that drive it only exists in pockets to do more and to do better. And there is a tolerance of mediocrity or in some ways I say is the easiest thing to do in organizations here is to do nothing. If you do nothing, no one bothers you, if you do something you are liable to be shot at. So the mind-set is just completely wrong.” (Interview 2, Western Isles)

There are changes; for instance the establishment of the Poverty Action Group in 2012 which brings together public and third sector agencies was seen as a step forward but stakeholders recognised that there was some way to go in embedding a strategic approach to poverty and social exclusion:

Poverty Action Group has certainly succeeded in getting it on the agenda of the Community Planning Partnership and the Health and the Council. So poverty is there as an awareness. Whether there is an acceptance of it is another matter. But the critical thing though is what do you do in terms of trying to join up working between agencies and how do you get something happening on that, and somebody being charged with delivering on a poverty agenda. Who actually delivers on it? So it maybe one of the CPP [*Community Planning Partnerships* – my italics] sub-groups has been tasked with taking a note of the overall view and each CPP sub-group needs to look at poverty in terms of their agenda, but it is not there yet (Interview 2, Western Isles).

5 Poverty and social exclusion in the Western Isles: perspectives and groups at risk

5.1 Introduction

This chapter starts by focusing on the views of the stakeholders on poverty and social exclusion and on the EU official indicators of poverty and social exclusion. This is followed by a discussion of the impact of demographic changes on the Western Isles and at risk groups identified by stakeholders.

5.2 Perceptions of poverty and social exclusion

The difference between objective measures and subjective perceptions of poverty and social exclusion are well known and rehearsed (Shucksmith et al., 1996). Without exception all of those interviewed in the Western Isles argued that poverty and social exclusion is relative, multifaceted and contingent on a number of contextual factors which is elaborated later in this section (see also Gordon et al., 2006). However, one interviewee also argued that poverty and exclusion was a result of particular choices exercised by individuals, for example spending money on 'Sky TV' which was seen as a luxury in contrast to spending money on 'basics' such as heating or food:

“I don't think there is any poverty here at all. It depends how you measure it. The government has measured it as 60% of wage, so of course you are going to have poverty, because it is a relative measure. I don't think there is any real poverty, but I think people make choices, which mean they might be in a position where they can't afford the sort of basics, and that can be called poverty. But there doesn't need to be any.” (Interview 8, Western Isles)

Although this was a minority view amongst the stakeholders, it is a view that may well reflect wider societal or cultural views in the Western Isles as discussed in chapter 4 and which was highlighted in a number of the interviews:

“I have picked it up, but I have been very surprised that actually the bigger battles are with the officers who have been there for a long time who tend to say, ... “We are not doing that, that has nothing do with us, and there is no poverty”.” (Interview 3, Western Isles)

“And a lot of people up here associate poverty with what they see on the TV. They think poverty is having absolutely nothing. And there is a lot of stigma attached to benefits, taking benefits. I work alongside people who resent people, you know they accuse them of getting widescreen TVs, you know getting everything for nothing, they are scroungers, and that is rife up here. They don't think, they just don't understand exactly what poverty is.” (Interview 4, Western Isles)

The need to counter negative perceptions of poverty and exclusion (and the stigmatisation that this gives rise to) was partly seen as an attitudinal issue, but also importantly the lack of visibility was identified as a major challenge by stakeholders:

“I think that with this generation there has always been this sort of work ethic, and, you know they have always viewed anyone who is not working as lazy. Anyone that is on benefits or is in a council house, they are looked upon as they are not working and, they are just playing the system. ... part of the course is to make people aware that you don't have to be on benefits to be in poverty. And, again it is convincing people, they think that as I said before, poverty means having nothing at all, not having a roof over your head, not having a bed. Also, we don't have any visible homelessness, there is nothing visible. We don't have people begging on the street, you know, there is nothing visible. No. We don't have, umm, people sleeping out rough, not visibly, although there has been, we know there are.” (Interview 4, Western Isles)

5.3 EU Indicators of poverty and social exclusion

With the exception of one stakeholder at the national level none of the participants involved in this case study appeared to be aware of the EU indicators and how they were used. The importance of having data at an appropriate national (e.g. Scottish rather than UK) level and regional /Local Authority level to help develop policies and intervention strategies was identified as important for addressing poverty and social exclusion by all those interviewed:

“Well yes it is like comparing us with Africa. People come up with these old comments that you hear, “Oh, there is no poverty in Britain, or the western world because we are not like Africa.” Well, of course we have, it is relative poverty but not absolute poverty. So I don't think that gets us anywhere at all. In fact I think it muddies the water totally. And if you do a full international study, then maybe you need to be aware of it.” (Interview 6, Western Isles)

In general, none of those interviewed were positive about the EU indicators, for two reasons. Firstly the indicators were thought to be limited as they did not address the complex and multi-dimensional nature of poverty and social exclusion sufficiently to help inform locally appropriate policy and practical interventions. Secondly, the geographical level at which the data was available was considered to be ineffective in reflecting the diversity of the regions/countries from a regional or a Local Authority perspective, as well as from a national-Scottish perspective. The following comment from an interviewee also reflected the views of others:

“So we are lumped in with the whole of Scotland? ... It doesn't show the bulk of our poverty. Then you have got the likes of Perthshire, you have got all very affluent farmers and big houses. And certain pockets of Glasgow, your Newton Mearns... you know your millionaire rows, in Edinburgh ...No, you can't lump the Western Isles in with all of those. And then Glasgow, you have got areas of deprivation like Drumchapel and Easterhouse, and Castlemilk. I would say that is misleading.” (Interview 1, Western Isles)

“That, I cannot believe. I cannot believe Scotland is not even orange. I am thinking here of the number of people that aren’t able to keep their house adequately warm, it must be huge. I earn a decent wage, and we do not keep our house adequately warm, because it costs too much money. We just put on another jumper! Though you will find that a lot of people have a personal car, but that is because they can’t access transport. It is that definition of luxury isn’t it?” (Interview 3, Western Isles)

All of the interviewees argued for the need to have more regional /local data:

“I mean I want to drill down to the situation in my local area so that I can, change the policies to address the issues ... the Scottish Household Survey, it has got some good information in there. The SIMD is very useful as well. That is the kind of information you need. You need to be able to drill down into your local area so you can see where you need to put your resources.” (Interview 6, Western Isles)

5.4 Risk factors: poverty and social exclusion in remote rural Scotland

Introduction: beyond essentialised categories

Given the complexity of people’s lives and identities, placing individuals and groups in specific categories (e.g. older people, disabled etc.) is problematic, both from a conceptual point of view, and in developing appropriate policy interventions (e.g. de Lima et al., 2011). The influence of intersecting identities- that is the multiple layers of identities that emerge from an individual’s gender, socio-economic position, ethnicity, experience of being disabled, and so on - in shaping experiences of poverty and social exclusion are important in helping to pinpoint appropriate strategies for addressing social exclusion (for further discussion on intersectionality see AWID, 2004; Yuval-Davis, 2011). Most of those interviewed identified a range of structural and individual/circumstantial factors that interact to increase the likelihood that some individuals and groups may be at greater risk of experiencing social exclusion and poverty than others. The interviewees reinforced the complex and multilayered nature of people’s situations and identities when it came to identifying specific groups at risk of poverty and social exclusion:

“Family and personal problems, death, bereavement, relationship breakdown, unfortunately, consumer issues, goods, services, debt, multiple debts, still on the rise, Fuel poverty was identified, you know people struggling to cope. Even middle income families. Last year we dealt with three 3 million Pounds of debt in this office and other offices in the Western Isles. We are doing a lot of appeals tribunals, welfare reform is about to kick in... Up until April, couples with children only had to work 16 hours a week to get Working Tax Credits, it is now 24 hours a week. And we have seen some employers only giving 21 hours a week, just below threshold, so that is difficult.” (Interview 1, Western Isles)

Overall there was a view that although older people were at risk of social exclusion they were relatively better off than other groups because they had some income security, an issue discussed further below:

“...the aged population, in terms of welfare reforms etc., are probably the best catered for. ...so the group I mentioned which tends to be the male under-25s, and the 45-55, tend to be probably the most isolated. Also, I would think, probably young families on the edge of these things too. Fuel poverty is a whole different proposition ... I would say that is a huge issue for them (older people- my italics).” (Interview 1, Western Isles)

A distinction was made between those pensioners on a basic state pension and those who were not:

“I think the next group then would be older people who are on state pensions because of the cost of living up here, the state pension is not enough to cover your food and things and people are making choices. And I think the cost of living, it isn't just what the fuel you put in your car or the heating, the fact that everything in the supermarket is 20p more and everywhere food prices have risen.” (Interview 3, Western Isles)

The extra costs of living in remote rural island communities in Scotland for pensioner households was also an issue identified by the Hirsch et al (2013) study on minimum income standards. Whilst recognising the problems in privileging one identity over another this section focuses on factors identified by the stakeholders as those that are likely to increase the risk of poverty and social exclusion with regard to different individuals/ groups in the Western Isles.

Disability

More than 25 per cent of Western Isles Citizens Advice Service (WICAS) clients were identified as being disabled or affected by ill-health across all age groups:

“No, you are getting from your 20 plus to your 60's and beyond that as well. I mean quite often it is 25 to 60 age group...I would say there is a trend, more people are coming to us who have disabilities, and they want to claim the likes of ESA (Employment Support Allowance-My italics), disability living allowance if you are under 65 and attendance allowance if you are over 65.” (Interview 1, Western Isles)

The Western Isles National Health Service also identified the prevalence of Coronary Heart Disease (6.1 %) and Hypertension (18.4 %) in the Western Isles as highest in the UK (QOF (Quality Outcomes Framework) Registers 2008/09 cited in NHS Western Isles undated). The extent to which these and other chronic and life limiting conditions such as dementia and disability are related to variables such as socio-economic background and gender is unclear. However as one of the interviewees admitted: 'Dementia, for us is a huge challenge going forward because of our demographic'. The prevalence of these chronic conditions as people live longer and its attendant consequences for health and care provision is a particular challenge for individuals and households living in remote rural areas where the population is

scattered and specialist services may not be widely available (Bevan and Croucher, 2008).

Compared to other groups disabled adults are reported to be twice as likely to experience poverty irrespective of location (EKOS, 2009, p44). However, research commissioned by the Scottish Government (EKOS, 2009) on experiences of poverty and social exclusion in rural areas and which also included the Western Isles, identified a range of additional challenges related to rurality that impacted on people with disabilities. These included: lack of employment opportunities; high transport costs; poor access to services; limited services; and fewer support organisations serving disabled groups. Service provision and access to support organisations were identified as more difficult the more remote the area. Disability combined with these factors associated with rural areas served to exacerbate the poverty and social exclusion experienced by disabled people resulting in high risks of loneliness and social isolation. The interviews for this project confirmed the salience of these factors:

“I think perhaps one of the more vulnerable groups is disabled, rather than old. Whereas some old people, let’s say older people over 65, have good pensions, are healthy, don’t need to rely on benefits or anything. I think it is perhaps the most vulnerable groups at the moment are those that are on (Disability Living Allowance- *My italics*) or whatever it has changed to. I think when you are dealing with disability, your capacity to deal with the problems, getting to a hospital appointment, or trying to find the money to pay for a taxi because there isn’t a bus anymore, ... you still have to have the energy to do all that, but if you are disabled you might not have the capacity to do all those things.” (Interview 1, Western Isles)

In addition, changes in entitlements to benefits for disabled people was identified as exacerbating the risk of poverty and social exclusion amongst the disabled even more, as well as having an impact on the workload of services such as the Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB). However, not all interviewed viewed the impact of the changes in access to benefits for the disabled in the same way:

“I have not noticed any particular issues with those on incapacity benefit or anything like that. I mean I know of people who have been on disability benefits and have been taken off them, and they are now working. But that is a good thing surely, but I am not aware of anyone who is on disability payment who is any worse off than they were.” (Interview 8, Western Isles)

Ageing - Older people /households

The concept of 'old age' was recognised by interviewees as continually changing as people live longer, creating new challenges:

“I mean the Scottish office when it existed, had this thing about over 50s being the elderly. And I thought, well this is nonsense. You are really talking about, 70 these days. I mean nobody is going to go into a care home until 85 now. I worked in that sector until I retired, but people went in at 65. Now I mean they are 85 and some of these folk are going to be really, so frail that is going to be really quite difficult. How you make that positive, other than

around the idea of DBT (Dialectic Behaviour Therapy- My italics) and the last few years in dignity, I don't know." (Interview 4, Western Isles)

Overall rural areas are reported as have a higher percentage of households with older adults than the rest of Scotland (Scottish Government, 2007). There was a view amongst those interviewed that older people were not as poor or socially excluded compared with other groups because they were perceived as having at least some income security based on their pensions. However, older people are a heterogeneous group and it is recognised that a number of factors coalesce to increase their vulnerability to poverty and social inclusion (EKOS 2009). This view was also reflected in the Western Isles and most of those interviewed identified specific issues which increased the risk to poverty and social exclusion of older people in remote rural areas such as the Western Isles.

The increasing numbers of 'solo' households generally, and single pensioner households in particular, across the UK, is well recognised (Bevan and Croucher, 2008; Jamieson et al., 2001). Rural Scotland was reported as having a higher percentage of 'older smaller' households (where one or both adults are of pensionable age) as well as single pensioner households than the rest of Scotland (Scotland, 2012, p6). With the projected increase of older people in rural areas it is likely that proportion of single pensioner households is also likely to increase, having implications for housing, health services , care and support provision.

The question of who is going to care for the growing older population as well as how to organise care is a major preoccupation for policy makers and service providers. The combination of geography (remoteness and Islands), demographic trends (ageing population) and settlement patterns (e.g. sparsity combined with scattered settlements) poses particular challenges for the organisation and delivery of care services:

"I mean geography is not a reason not to have home care. ... They try and recruit home carers from a big range of villages from across the islands... So today you have got 2 home carers in [village-My italics] looking after 4 people and if two of those people die there is not enough work for them to be employed full time [in the village- My italics], so are they on full time contracts or are they on flexi contracts? And it is that uncertainty people don't want to live with." (Interview 4, Western Isles)

"...some of the carers give them a couple of years and they will need cared for, because they are all moving into the bracket of potentially accessing services rather than delivering them, and young people don't want to look after old people. And I think that is a challenge across the whole of the country." (Interview 3, Western Isles)

The choice of ageing in place may not be an option for some of the people living in remote rural areas, as care services, including access to sheltered accommodation, may be limited and public and private sector care homes are seeking to achieve economies of scale:

"I think we have only one private one in the Stornoway area... All the other homes are local authority. We had a lot of small care homes and when the

new regulations came in, they just shut them down. I mean they have gone too far now, they could have done it a bit at a time. Because these were actually very good care homes, and they were in the localities where people lived. Whereas as things stand at the moment, you have got people coming from Ness to Stornoway to come to a care home. And then their families have to come all the way. And if it is, an old man he has to come to Stornoway and his wife is in Ness, she hardly ever sees him. And that is not good.” (Interview 6, Western Isles)

The centralisation of care homes in towns can isolate older people from their partners, family and friends as well as creating extra costs for those who may have to travel great distances to visit their partners or relatives, assuming they have their own transport or are in a position to drive. However, on the other hand interviewees also identified a strong sense of social responsibility felt by islanders towards older members of their family:

“I think in many ways there is a sort of respect for older people. You get in terms of, if there is any debate about chopping the home care service or lowering the financing of the care homes, there is sort of an uproar. You know the elderly, “Not my granny!”, It is much more they are regarded with respect...” (Interview 4, Western Isles)

Older people can also face constraints in terms of types of housing or accommodation available to them in rural areas which may increase their risk of poverty and social exclusion. Research has consistently highlighted that levels of owner occupation are higher in rural areas compared with non-rural areas across all age groups for a variety of reasons including the lack of an extensive socially rented sector (Atterton, 2013; Philip et al., 2003). A review of housing issues for older people in rural areas suggested that although younger households in rural and non-rural areas were more likely to live in rented accommodation, those over 75 years of age in non-rural areas were 16.1 per cent more likely to live in rented accommodation than those living in rural areas (Bevan and Croucher, 2008, p 5). The mismatch between changing demographic trends and housing stock is discussed further in Chapter 5. In addition, issues such as climate as well as the age and state of properties that old people inhabit in remote rural areas may require extra resources (e.g. heating, clothing, etc.) and extra effort to keep homes well maintained and warm (EKOS 2009; Bevan and Croucher, 2008; Hirsch et al., 2013). These issues also surfaced in the interviews in the Western Isles:

“...one of the interesting things about fuel poverty is obviously you are going to spend more on heating up in the north with climate,.. Where I am from you move to three or four different houses in your life... Here you end up with people stuck in houses that are too big for them ... they have got council tax and if they are not getting council tax benefit, they are just over the edge, they have got a small occupational pension and also they are having to heat and maintain them.” (Interview 5.2, Western Isles)

Older people and people on low income having to make difficult choices and having to make do was an issue raised by the stakeholders:

“And there the high costs of fuel, heating fuel in particular, that is a huge issue for us... if you are in a house that is being heated by electricity, it is very expensive. People don't put their heating on when they should be having their heating on, and you can sometimes go into a house and it is damp. Or because the heating is something that they treasure so much, they don't open the windows enough, so the house becomes damp. So housing is another issue, and we are moving on that.” (Interview 6, Western Isles)

Scottish reviews of research on housing and older people in rural areas suggests that pensioners who own their homes may not be able to afford repairs and may be reluctant to report problems if living in rented accommodation (Bevan and Croucher, 2008; EKOS, 2009). Within this context fuel poverty was also a frequently cited problem highlighted by interviewees. Although it was understood as affecting all types of households older people were identified as particularly vulnerable:

“Well in the course of my work as ... I was visiting the homes of elderly people and principally I have to say elderly women, and finding them sitting in front of one electric bars, wrapped in blankets and coats and things. And I thought there was something wrong there.” (Interview 6, Western Isles)

The tendency of pensioners to spend more of their time at home can result in an increase in the usage of fuel and fuels costs. This is exacerbated for those living in rural areas due to many of the challenges highlighted throughout this report (see also EKOS, 2008). The potential for older people to overcome these barriers is constrained in a context where access to alternative accommodation such as Sheltered Accommodation is limited in rural areas (Bevan and Croucher, 2008) and where there has been an increasing withdrawal of local services paralleled by centralisation of services (EKOS, 2009).

While research suggests that older people express high levels of satisfaction with provision of services despite restricted access to services in rural areas, this is largely attributed to lower levels of expectation among older people (Hope et al 2000 cited in Bevan and Croucher, 2008). It is recognised that rurality - mainly due to the particular problems of access to transport and health and social care services - means that older people living in rural areas may not be able to access the support services seen as the norm for older people in general reinforcing their social isolation (Accent Scotland and Mauthner, 2006).

The issue of under-claiming entitlements in rural communities has also been an issue highlighted consistently by research (Bevan and Croucher, 2008; EKOS, 2009; Shucksmith et al., 1994). The main reasons for under - claiming entitlements have included: lack of access to information sometimes related to the fact that agencies may find some households difficult to access; feelings of stigma and a strong sense of being independence:

“We are unique up here in that- Well, first of all because it is a smallish community, and there is stigma. So at the moment I have developed a Poverty Awareness course, which I will be running for officers, but I am also developing poverty awareness workshops within the community. And I suspect that is going to be the more difficult one. There is the pride, there is the stigma attached to poverty.” (Interview 7, Western Isles)

Youth

It is widely recognised that youth in rural areas are a heterogeneous group whose experiences vary depending on the characteristics of the area they are from, and their 'social background, gender and biographical experiences' (Jamieson and Grove, 2008, p. 2). Despite their heterogeneity some common themes emerge. The most important of these are that youth out-migration is driven by the desire to access further and higher education and better quality employment opportunities which are generally considered to be lacking in rural areas. However, within this context Jamieson and Groves (2008) suggest a difference among young people, related to socio-economic background and how this shapes their preparedness for migration:

“All of these studies indicate that a portion of young people anticipate leaving the area from an early age, and that those who are most likely to be prepared for leaving have parents who benefited from higher education.” (p. 3)

By contrast in a study undertaken by Jones and Jamieson (1997, cited in Jamieson and Grove, 2008) evidence suggested that young people considering outmigration and whose parents did not have university education failed to receive appropriate guidance, information and support that would facilitate decision making about migrating or staying (see also Jamieson, 2000). These differences reflect a deep seated view that:

“... leaving the area is evidence of seeking to make the most of yourself and being open to change, while staying is evidence of arrested development, lack of ambition and closed attitudes. These are stereotypes that reflect complex discourses with connotations of social class, including the presumption of the greater worth of formal qualifications over locally learned skills and that trade on the devaluing of rural places in comparison to the presumed complexity and sophistication of city life.” (Jamieson and Grove, 2008, p. 3)

Much of the evidence uncovered by Jamieson and Grove's (2008) reviews was reflected in the views of those interviewed. For example low achievers at school were identified as a group that were not well served:

“I think the one group that gets really left on the wayside is the low school achiever, they wouldn't find it easy maybe because of confidence or lack of social skills or whatever. They wouldn't find it easy to live on the mainland... So there is a whole group there which is offered very little here, because of the economic situation is such that there is not that many manual labourers or shop workers needed. But of course this is where the college comes in, and certainly it does come in trying to support these groups.” (Interview 6, Western Isles)

The limited availability of employment, for young people who remained on the Islands despite being trained was an issue cited by almost all interviewees:

“There is a lack of jobs here, there is quite a lot of support around skills and training but if there is no job to go to at the end, you can be as trained as you like and there is nothing to go to. And £50 a week or whatever they get is a

tiny amount of money and doesn't pay for them to live independently.”
(Interview 6, Western Isles)

For young people, looking for work whilst living in remote areas posed challenges, often exacerbated by the recent centralisation of services such as job centres, variable access to high speed internet connections and poor access to public transport:

“...if you are a young adult trying perhaps to look for work etc., sometimes it is not always so easy for you. You must have access to a phone, hopefully a computer as well, so you can fire off your CV, and you occasionally will have to travel. Now either you will have to have a car if you live in a rural area, because buses, good as they are, aren't fantastic.” (Interview 6, Western Isles)

The current economic climate and the changing State Welfare System was identified as increasing the risk of unemployment among young people on the Islands:

“A lot of these boys and girls would go into the building trade, our building trade is very depressed right now, it is a universal thing. So it is very difficult to find apprentices for boys... But we cannot guarantee them anything at the end of the apprenticeship. That is the one thing that we can't do. There was a time in the past that you could, a young person would start an apprenticeship and have a good job to go to. But we have no guarantees now unfortunately.”
(Interview 6, Western Isles)

The establishment of the University of the Highlands and Islands was identified as important in improving higher education opportunities with regard to some limited disciplines for young people who wished to remain on the Island. However, it was also recognised that the issue of young people leaving for education was not necessarily a negative trend, it was the lack of opportunities for young people to return to the Islands because of the dearth of skilled and well paid employment which was identified as the main problem (see also Jamieson and Grove, 2008).

Other factors that have been identified as significant in shaping migration decisions of rural youth are lack of affordable housing (Hall-Aitken, 2007) and gender (see Jamieson and Grove, 2008) and disability. The lack of availability of housing for first time buyers was also identified as reinforcing the social exclusion of younger people. Furthermore young people who had special needs and required additional support beyond 18 years of age especially in an Island context (i.e. moving to another local authority area is not an option and nor would some wish to) were also identified as an excluded group.

“...young people who come to the end of their supported education (i.e. young people with special need) and what happens then? I think we have issues around dealing with them. There are organisations that look after them to a certain extent but I think it is a bit skimpy myself. They can stay at college until they are 25 and then after that, the parents are at a loss at the end of it all. “Where can our lad go now to get support...?” (Interview 6, Western Isles)

Households in social housing

Twenty per cent of the households in the Western Isles were reported by one of the stakeholders as being in the social housing sector. Recent changes announced in relation to the State Welfare System were identified as exacerbating poverty and social exclusion amongst groups living in social housing: the bedroom tax and changes with regard to payment of housing benefit. In a context where housing has not necessarily kept up with demographic changes, in particular the building of smaller one bedroom houses, social housing tenants are likely to incur extra costs because of limited housing options, as well as having other consequences in terms of meeting needs of a changing population – for example the increasing trend in 'solo' living .

Solo and Low income households

The rise of single person households or 'solo living' has been identified by research as an important feature of Scottish society impacting on income, health and social care and with specific policy implications for housing demand, access to health and social care services (Jamieson et al., 2001). In the Western Isles adults on low incomes and /or on benefits, as well as single person households including single pensioners discussed above were identified as being at particular risk of poverty and social exclusion (see Hirsch et al., 2013). The key issues centre around limited opportunities for well paid, skilled and secure employment; disability/ill-health and issues related to debt and changing State Welfare provision. For example the WICAB Annual Report for 2011 -2012 reported that it had 5,163 client contacts, of which Welfare Benefits and Tax Credits was the largest category of work and debt discussed next was the single largest issue (WICAS, 2012, p. 8).

Debt

Debt was seen to affect a wide range of households, including middle income households, across all ages. The lack of access to basic banking service, discussed further below, especially amongst those who are identified as financially excluded and/or on benefits has been identified as a major challenge (Consumer Focus, 2011), Pay day loans were identified as a growing problem and numbers filing for personal bankruptcy was seen to be growing. For example, The Money Advice team of WICAS had dealt with 2,915 finance related issues with 88 per cent being debt related, amounting to over £3.5 million of debt (WICAS, 2012,p8). Problems of recovering debts such as not paying council tax or housing rent was an issue. However the issue of recovering debt in an island context (as there was nowhere else to go) did pose some dilemmas as pointed out by one of the participants:

“And plus from a housing point of view, we can’t pass our troubles on, we have to contain them. We have to manage within our own area, so therefore making people homeless is not what the authorities are about. Obviously these things do happen, but they are a very last resort.” (Interview 5.2, Western Isles)

Alcohol/ drug abuse

Whilst it was acknowledged that there is a prevalence of alcohol and drug abuse on the Islands it was not given much priority by stakeholders. One stakeholder felt that external public discourses related to alcohol in the Western Isles were exaggerated and that the evidence suggested it was no worse than the rest of Scotland. With regard to drugs and alcohol apart from recognising a prevalence there was little information cited in the interviews about this group, with the exception of one interviewee. The latter stated that most of the contact with people with a drug problem has tended to focus on dealing with it as a homelessness issue with seemingly little effort at supporting individuals to move on from their addiction. Overall the focus appeared to be on dealing with the symptoms rather than the underlying causes:

“Some will be in hostels, there is a new hostel being built. But, I have 2 bugbears with some of it. One, in terms of the prevention of homelessness, nothing is happening, and it is just very poor. How do you prevent that happening and how do you, particularly when it is a kind of family breakdown ... intervene immediately and try and prevent that. Rather than, pushing them into temporary accommodation, trying to engineer them back home subsequently is just well proven not to work, not to be effective. So there is an issue with effective prevention. There is also an issue with the support and rehabilitation and all that kind of stuff. So it is purely stick people into temporary accommodation and then manage the accommodation and not try and manage the person into developing skills and all that kind of stuff.”
(Interview 3, Western Isles)

6 Poverty and social exclusion in the Western Isles: key issues, policy responses and initiatives

6.1 Introduction

Responding to poverty and social exclusion is a challenge given the complex nature of the phenomena and the spread of responsibilities across different domains and levels of governance. The prevailing sectoral /domain specific policy foci as well as responses and measures reinforce silo-thinking and fragmented approaches to addressing poverty and social exclusion.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The next two sections summarise the main issues that have emerged from the Western Isles interviews with stakeholders. The final section highlights some of the policies and initiatives being taken to address issues related to poverty and social exclusion in Scotland and the Western Isles, identified by stakeholders as well as those identified by examining relevant websites and literature.

6.2 Factors and processes shaping poverty and social exclusion in the Western Isles

Five interrelated factors, summarised below, were identified as the key drivers in increasing the vulnerability of some groups to social exclusion and poverty in the Western Isles.

Remoteness and sparsity

The remoteness and sparsity of the Western Isles was a constant theme that underpinned all the interviews and was perceived by stakeholders as fundamental in explaining some of the specific experiences with regard to social exclusion and poverty. Remoteness in relation to the geographical location of the Western Isles as well as being a collection of Islands and sparsity (population size and dispersed population) were closely associated with three issues :

- Challenges in accessing services and poor transport;
- High costs of living combined with low levels of income
- Labour market constraints and limited employment opportunities.

Accessing Services and poor transport

Equity in accessing appropriate services across the Islands was identified as a major challenge and the further away from Stornoway the greater the challenges. Furthermore, the increasing centralisation of some services in Stornoway and poor access to good communications(including transport) were identified as significant in shaping poverty and social exclusion for remote communities and households. Lack

of access to good quality and affordable communications (both transport and quality broadband services) not only added to costs but also impacted on the ability of people to access services, employment and participate in activities that are vital for being socially included. The pressure to reduce public expenditure was identified as leading to cuts in non-statutory services (such as community transport).

Costs of Living

On the issue of living costs, a recent study on remote rural Scotland estimated that the minimum income for 'an acceptable standard of living' required by households living in remote places such as the Western Isles was well above what is needed in the rest of the UK. Most stakeholders consistently highlighted that the experience of poverty and social exclusion was compounded by, for example: the high costs of living (e.g. high cost of fuel, transport, delivery charges food, phone bills, etc); lack of quality access to broadband; low paid seasonal employment; changes in welfare benefits; and the inability to access loans from mainstream lenders. These factors combined to limit the ability of individuals and households to manoeuvre, or cope with unexpected or additional expenditure, resulting in debt to companies charging high interest rates and a rise in households using food banks.

Labour market

Overall the lack of good quality employment opportunities was identified as impacting on the ability of individuals to exercise choice about remaining on the Island, leading to high levels of youth outmigration which was a major preoccupation amongst those interviewed. Although opportunities for education and training were recognised as improving through the establishment of the University of the Highlands and Islands, the lack of secure, skilled and well paid jobs was identified as a major problem in retaining population on the Islands.

Demographic trends and their impact

The demographic trends - a growing ageing population, declining fertility rates and high levels of youth out-migration- were recognised as posing specific challenges for the Islands and its communities. The ability of service providers to respond to these trends, especially with regard to developing appropriate housing provision and providing care for the elderly in a dispersed context were identified as major challenges. The need for strategic leadership in planning ahead for demographic changes was identified as vital to avoid reinforcing the social exclusion of older people whilst at the same time ensuring opportunities (e.g. employment and housing) for younger people to remain or return to the Islands if they desire.

Economic climate and changes in the state welfare provision

The impact of the financial crisis and uncertainties around recovery were identified as exacerbating the situation of those who are already vulnerable. Cuts in public expenditure at the national and regional/local levels respectively were identified as resulting in the reduction and centralisation of public services. Although the precise impact of the UK Welfare Reform Act 2012 and the Pensions Act 2011 are yet to be fully assessed in the Western Isles most stakeholders identified a number of

cases highlighting the negative impact of the welfare changes on individuals and households. For example, the increasing emphasis on accessing welfare services on line was predicted to impact adversely on those already in poverty and excluded including those who don't have access to basic banking services and those who are digitally excluded. In addition the unemployed, those on disability benefits, those in debt and those subject to the 'bedroom tax' were all identified as groups whose situation was likely to be compounded by the welfare reforms.

Social /cultural factors

Social and cultural factors in the Western Isles were identified as being both positive and negative. Social support, values of mutual respect and social cohesion associated with close knit communities was identified as important in supporting individuals who were older or in need. However, the potentially negative aspects—stigma and judgemental attitudes attached to those in poverty, the unemployed and benefit claimants - and the polarising and divisive influence of religion was recognised as leading to a denial that poverty and social exclusion exists as well as a potential reason for people not claiming benefits because of 'pride' and fear of stigmatisation.

Leadership and partnership working

The establishment of the Poverty Action Group in 2012 which includes public and third sector agencies is an important step forward in the Western Isles. However, the need for strategic leadership and vision at the highest levels across key agencies was identified as important in developing appropriate policies and practices related to addressing poverty and social exclusion in the Western Isles.

6.3 Groups at risk

Stakeholders emphasised the importance of not treating specific groups (e.g. disabled people, older and young people, etc.) as homogenous, emphasising instead the complex and multilayered nature of people's situations and identities involving a range of structural and individual/circumstantial factors.

Disability

Disabled people are identified as being at a greater risk of poverty than most other groups across Scotland. In the Western Isles context disability was identified as affecting a variety of groups and ages. In addition to the specific challenges identified with rurality in general, the main factors highlighted as affecting the disabled in particular were: fewer support organisations serving disabled groups and the more remote the area the more difficult it was to access appropriate services and support organisations, reinforcing their social isolation; the need to address the health consequences – chronic ill health and dementia in particular - of an ageing population; and the consequence of changing entitlements to benefits for disabled people across all ages and socio-economic backgrounds. The latter in particular was identified as exacerbating the risk of poverty and social exclusion amongst the

disabled as well as having an impact on the workload of services such as the Citizens Advice Bureau in a context of diminishing resources.

Older people/households

Lack of appropriate accommodation and the organisation and provision of care in the context of the Island's geography (remoteness and Islands), settlement patterns (e.g. sparsity combined with scattered settlements) and demographic trends (ageing population and youth outmigration) were identified as affecting older people in particular. Specific factors included, for example: lack of home care services and the challenges of providing such services to dispersed settlements; limited or no access to appropriate housing or facilities such as sheltered accommodation; centralisation of services in towns including the location of care homes for older people; costs of fuel and lack of public transport; and cost of food and household goods and services. These factors led not only to limited or lack of choices, with regard to aging in place or at home, but also to social isolation and in many cases extra costs leading to high levels of fuel poverty. Poverty and social exclusion in some cases was reinforced by under-claiming entitlements due to lack of access to information, feelings of stigma and a strong sense of independence.

Youth

Limited educational and training opportunities, despite recent improvements as well as the lack of skilled employment were seen as fundamental in impacting on youth in two ways: high levels of youth outmigration for those that can leave and limited opportunities for those that remain. In addition other factors identified as limiting choices and exacerbating the situation for young people in the Western Isles were: the economic crisis and its impact on employment; the changes in welfare entitlements in relation to those who are unemployed in a context of lack of or limited employment opportunities; lack of affordable housing; and disability or having special needs.

Households: social housing, 'solo' living and debt

Changes in the State Welfare System provision and the introduction of the 'bedroom tax' and changes in the payment of housing benefit in particular were identified as increasing the risk of poverty and social exclusion for those living in social housing as well as those living on their own. This was particularly serious in a context where housing has not kept up with demographic changes (solo living and smaller households) and there are a lack of small one or two bedroom houses. The rise of 'solo living' or single person households and its impact on income, health, support and housing were also factors identified as likely to impact on adults/households on low incomes and/or on benefits in particular. Debt, however, was identified as not only affecting low income households but also middle income households, across all ages. The majority of those interviewed perceived debt as a consequence of the economic downturn and changes in state provided welfare benefits.

6.4 Policies and initiatives – tackling poverty and social exclusion

Scottish Government

This section provides a brief overview of the Scottish Government's policies and measures with regard to addressing poverty and social exclusion. It is beyond the scope of this study to assess the effectiveness or otherwise of the Scottish Government's policies and measures adopted to address poverty and social exclusion, nonetheless it is worth noting a recent warning from a Joseph Rowntree Foundation funded report (Alridge et al., 2013). Whilst Alridge et al. (2013) acknowledged that some progress has been made on poverty and social exclusion in Scotland and that the powers of the Scottish Government may be constrained to some extent by the devolutionary settlement, they nevertheless argue that:

“Poverty is currently far from central to the independence debate as it stands but it is vital that it becomes so. This discussion is, after all, about the kind of country Scotland wants to be and should cover areas that are central to tackling poverty – health, schools, childcare, benefits, taxes, work and pay, services, housing and more. The Scottish Government already has powers over many of these areas. It is important that the discussion of independence does not obscure the need for policy development in all these areas to tackle problems that will exist whatever decision the Scottish people take in 2014.” (p. 6)

The Scottish Government in response to the Europe 2020 strategy and the requirement of member states to submit a National Reform Programme, confirmed its support of the EU Strategy on eliminating poverty. 'Poverty and Inclusion' is part of the 'Solidarity' target which is an aspect of the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework which also includes National Indicators and Outcomes against which progress is measured - see chapter 2 (Scottish 2011a).

On 'poverty and Inclusion' in particular the Scottish Government's government (2011b) stated its commitment as follows:

“The Scottish Government has a bold approach to tackling the long-term drivers of poverty, through early intervention and prevention. Our level of ambition to tackling poverty and inequality is exemplified in our Solidarity target, to increase the amount and proportion of income received by the poorest 30% of households by 2017. Poverty in Scotland has fallen substantially since 1994 - from 21% to 17% in relative terms, although this progress has stalled in recent years.” (p. 22)

Broadly three strategic areas were identified as areas of focus for addressing the 'Solidarity' target: 'stakeholder engagement'; 'achieving our potential' and 'child poverty strategy' (Scottish Government, 2011, p 23-24). The first of these, 'stakeholder engagement' was the establishment of a 'Tackling Poverty Board' with Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) (see Education Scotland, undated).

Although the Board met between 2009 and 2011, from an examination of the Scottish Government websites it was difficult to ascertain whether it continues to exist. The emphasis of the second strategy is on 'achieving our potential' (see Scottish Government, 2007). An emphasis on 'early intervention and prevention' approaches as well as a recognition of a number of interrelated sectors and groups that have been identified as requiring focused attention are part of this strategy. For example it included: children and young people; 'regenerating disadvantaged communities'; reducing health inequalities; promoting equality and addressing discrimination; and delivering affordable housing. The strategy also refers to initiatives related to employment and skills training and enhancing the 'financial capability' of those in poverty. And finally the 'Child Poverty Strategy' emphasises the Scottish Government's commitment to eradicating child poverty by 2020 :

“The two key aims of this strategy are to: maximise household resources, particularly for low income families; and to improve children's wellbeing and life chances.” (Scottish Government 2011, p. 24)

In this context measures to reduce fuel poverty including a 'fuel poverty programme' to assist families on low income with energy bills, the extension of free school meals as well as support for the Living Wage are cited (Scottish Government, p24). Measure to alleviate the impacts of poverty and social exclusion in particular are also present in the Scottish Government's response to the 'Europe 2020 Strategy' in relation to sectors such as education, the economy and skills, innovation and so on (see Scottish Government 2011b). Thus reflecting a recognition of the importance of adopting a multipronged approach that is cross sectoral. In addition there have also been ongoing attempts to improve the statistics and evidence base on poverty and social exclusion in Scotland (for further details see Scottish Government, undated c).

An initiative which had a specific remote rural focus was the piloting of the Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) Scheme in 2008 until Spring 2011, which was further extended to April 2012. The RET scheme involves setting ferry fares on the basis of the cost of travelling an equivalent distance by road (see Halcrow Group Ltd, 2011 for information about the evaluation of the pilot). This was introduced to address issues related to transportation costs in what were described as 'fragile ' communities such as the Western Isles. Whilst the evaluation of the pilot suggested mixed results with regard to issues such as population growth and economic development (Halcrow Group Ltd) , the stakeholders felt overall it had made:

“...a huge difference. It has made travel to and from the islands much more acceptable, and it has enhanced tourism, because we have had a lot more people coming here for their holidays, and that was very, very good.” (Interview 6, Western Isles)

However, the RET had been withdrawn for commercial vehicles in 2012, which some stakeholders argued:

“... means that goods coming in have to be at that additional cost, and that is passed on to the public. So that was not a very clever idea, and why the government did that, I have no idea. I just can't understand it...But all of these

little things are another blockage for us and make things more expensive.”
(Interview 6, Western Isles)

Western Isles

Multi-agency working

As mentioned above all Local Authorities are required to report on how and to what extent they are meeting the National Indicators and Outcomes related to the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework within the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) (For further information on SOAs see (Scottish Government, undated d). It would appear that with the recent inclusion of targets in relation to fuel poverty and child poverty within the Council economic strategy overall poverty and social exclusion targets have not featured much in the SOA targets of the Western Isles Local Authority. However the importance of interagency working was recognised as crucial by all those interviewed. The recently established Poverty Action Group and the commitment of the Community Planning Partnership (agencies representing key public sector and third sector agencies, respectively) to take the lead is seen as an important step forward:

“...the CPP take the lead on the poverty agenda in terms of the strategic and policy type things. And part of that obviously will be including poverty higher up in the kind of single outcome agreement.”

Thus steps are being taken to develop a strategic multi-agency approach to addressing poverty and social exclusion in the Western Isles. The awareness role of the PAG group through the organisation of seminars and training sessions run by agencies who are part of PAG was identified as being important in this process of developing a strategic focus on poverty and social exclusion as well as in tackling issues such as stigma:

“Well, the purpose of the Poverty Action Group has been to get all of the local agencies to get together to help people. And we are doing that through the community planning partnership, and that has been very successful. We are still at the stage really of raising awareness, because there are lots of people who still think: A) that there is no poverty; B) that people who get benefits are just scroungers; and C) why should we bother helping them sort of idea. I mean we have got to get over that, so we are doing a lot of training. ...So going forward we will have all of the agencies working together to support people who are in difficulty.”

Alongside poverty awareness training agencies the Poverty Action Group were planning to develop and pilot a needs assessment system as well as a signposting and referral system for those in receipt of services as well as those providing a service:

“So if they [an agency –my italics] are going into the home, they can take note of the circumstances, they will be trained to be aware of what benefits, what organisations are out there, so they can signpost people...this form will be filled out for the patient and put to a central point and from there we can assess what the needs are. So when everyone goes into a household, they know what to

look for, they know where to send people, or they know who to contact.” (Interview 6, Western Isles)

The emphasis on collaboration between agencies and the need for interagency working was recognised as important:

“I mean there is no point in a community nurse going into a household and just dealing with the medical side and ignoring any other issues there might be. If there are housing issues they should refer them to the Hebridean Housing Partnership (HPP).” (Interview 7, Western Isles)

The coming together of agencies to discuss dementia from different perspectives, for example, was cited as important in developing strategies to address a problem that has particular significance in the context of the demographic trends in the Western Isles:

“...we were talking about the eight pillars of dementia, and, for a start, everybody was engaged in the discussion, knowledgeable about the subject, but because they came from different backgrounds, they came with different ways at looking at the issue. And people were saying “I haven’t thought” or “I hadn’t heard about that.” So it was a sharing of ideas, and a number of the participants said to me afterwards, “That was a really good meeting. I found that really helpful.” So we need to do an awful lot of that, and I know that the people who are actually working with the patients in the community want to do that. We need to break down the barriers that are stopping it happening. And there are an awful lot of structures in both organizations that get in the way. But I think we are moving in the right direction.” (Interview 6, Western Isles)

Stakeholders identified a number of other initiatives seeking to address the particular challenges faced in the Western Isles .These are briefly described below.

National Health Service (NHS)

The ongoing role of the NHS in the Western Isles in supporting activities related to poverty and social exclusion was reflected in their local development plan. Stakeholders cited a number of initiatives that have been funded, such as addressing access issues related to, for example, coronary care services, health monitoring of the 40 plus age groups and Fas Falainn ('Grow Healthy'). The latter was originally established as a Healthy Living Centre and its activities have focused on two strands:

“It was growing your own, grow your own affordable fruit and vegetables on the island and the second strand was healthy eating on a budget. But from there it has developed now, and now it has begun to incorporate sheer roots project, which is the cultural side of the project. And that uses food as a vehicle for community engagement.” (Interview 7, Western Isles)

Improving welfare entitlement take up

The issue of under-claiming of welfare entitlements has been identified as on-going issue in rural contexts (EKOS, 2009; Shucksmith et al., 1997). Recognising that there was a problem with households /individuals claiming benefits entitlements they might

be due, the local authority developed a targeted approach to address the issues discussed in chapter:

“Two council officers were appointed to work on maximizing benefits by phoning people who were over 60 years of age at their homes. Talking to them about it, making a judgement on the telephone that they might well be entitled to benefits, going to visit them, filling out the forms and making sure that they got the uptake. And in the first full year we took in 1.5 million pounds. So that was a huge benefit, and that was not a one off thing, it was on-going benefits.” (Interview 6, Western Isles)

Addressing the needs of the care sector

One of the significant challenges identified by the Local Authority is the need to attract more young people into caring for older people by focusing on issues such as conditions of work and progression:

“We are trying however to engage young people and trying to persuade them that the caring professions can be a good career to go into and demonstrate to them that there are ways that you can move up the ladder in the caring profession and that it is a positive thing to do...even to make working for the council as a carer in the community into a proper job with a proper salary with a contract and all that. Instead of just add on, so people who are doing that kind of work are respected, because it is very difficult work to do.” (Interview 6, Western Isles)

Again working with other agencies such as the local Health Board to address the job role and responsibilities was also cited as important in addressing the potential shortage of carers whilst also improving the service provided:

“And we are working together with the health board to make sure that, care workers are in the position to do a bit more than they used to do in the past. I mean the used to make cups of tea and do a little bit here and there. So they should be able to give people their pills for example, help them to go to bed, you know, these types of things which very often in the past were done by people in the health board staff. So we are looking for staff to take a more considered approach to the work that they do and not have this, I go in there for 15 minutes make a cup of tea and I get out. They are there to look after the people, you know.” (Interview 6, Western Isles)

Addressing training for carers was identified as an essential prerequisite for attracting and establishing a professional caring service for older people. However, the prevailing negative stereotypes of caring for older people was contrasted with the positive stereotypes that exist in relation to working with children reflected in the high level of demand for child training courses amongst young people. In this context discussions were ongoing with the local college on how best to develop training that meets the demands arising from the changing demographic trends:

“If they ran a course on caring for old people, nobody would sign up for it. They [local college-my italics] are actually working with the council to look at how they can design a course that would give people options. So you do much more generic caring and they would actually then have to do a bit of everything, a bit of child care, a bit of old people. And then you can choose

because. Because some time it is a perception rather than a reality that puts people off.” (Interview 6, Western Isles)

Housing and Energy

The need for more debate on type of housing provision to focus on, as well as a more proactive housing strategy to address key challenges, were identified as important in addressing the housing needs of different groups:

“So there is an issue again on who do you build for. Should you build for elderly or should you build more for younger people. Should that be where you really put your priorities? So again, maybe a debate that isn’t happening ... we have maybe a local housing strategy that is reactive rather than a proactive council, corporate strategy. Which says, okay, here are what the trends are, but this is what we are doing to arrest them. So it could be providing housing for younger people, enabling them to get on the property ladder that is one strand in terms of how we do that.” (Interview 2, Western Isles)

The Rural Housing Services has set up an initiative to 'help young people remain in Scottish island communities through helping them establish independent homes with funding from the Prince's Countryside Fund (Rural Housing Scotland, undated). Stakeholders did not mention this initiative in the interviews. With an exception of a recently advertised PhD where the focus is on housing pathways amongst young people in the Western Isles, it is difficult to ascertain the activities being undertaken through this initiative in the Western Isles.

Assisting people to reduce fuel bills by improving energy efficiency in homes and reducing their need for heating was identified as important in helping to reduce costs for those on low incomes and /or on welfare benefits:

“Raising people’s income is more difficult, particularly when people are dependent on benefits, but you certainly can put more and more money in people’s pockets. So in terms of stuff we have been doing, in terms of a housing stock investing, we have been doing a lot in terms of a insulation works and doing more efficient heating systems. But also more on trying to reduce people’s need for heating, rather than spending lots of money on heating themselves. So that is very much a work in progress.” (Interview 2, Western Isles)

In addition to improving the energy efficiency of houses, the Hebridean Housing Partnership (HPP) is also working with others to further learning and developments on issues related to improving energy efficiency. For example HHP works with Green Space, a University of the Highlands and Islands research centre based on the Island (<http://www.development.uhi.ac.uk/projects/renewables/greenspace>). The main purpose is to share ideas and promote a two way exchange about technological developments on renewable energy and heating systems as well as understanding people's behaviours and everyday practices in the use of energy:

“And so we are joining up with them [Green Space- my italics] and they are working with contacts in other universities across the Nordic countries. So it is a bit of learning from that as well...in terms of some of these heating systems,

renewable heating systems, there is the technology side of it, but there is also the issue of understanding people's behaviour which needs to be factored in. So it helps the academics through us to have access to the real world, and equally we can learn from the academic side of it." (Interview 2, Western Isles)

The importance of early intervention is emphasised by the Scottish Government in addressing issue related to poverty and exclusion (Scottish Government 2011b). HHP are taking this approach by developing links with schools with a view to helping to stimulate young people's interest in and knowledge about renewables, and issues related to energy, at an early age:

"We are trying to develop more the links with the schools and tell them, "Well we are here... the whole renewable issue is an opportunity here. Certainly an issue, an opportunity for youngsters in terms of work and training. So you can then be trained, you are linking up those schools, academic side, industry side. And building these connections, and here we can all help each other. If we can teach some of these kids some of these things, you know, these are our tenants of the future, so they are better prepared to work with these things." (Interview 2, Western Isles)

'Localising the economy'

Examples were also cited by Stakeholders about efforts to stimulate jobs and apprenticeships locally in a variety of ways and in a range of sectors. For example an emphasis on using local food supplies for food provided in schools; and procurement and local benefits clauses (though it was recognised that there are complex legal issues around procurement that have to be addressed). The Community Planning Partnership (CPP) was cited as important in driving this forward:

"One of the things the CPP has really been pushing, and to be fair to the council have really picked up and run with this localising the economy type thing and particularly community benefit stuff within contracts. Again, because of our size you are quite limited on what you can do with that, but it is now part of our procurement process. Every contract that is out, whether it is about getting in food for the canteen...there has to be a conversation about whether we can get a community benefit in there. So for example a construction contract, one of the really obvious one, so anybody who gets a construction contract, they have to employ a local modern apprentice that is really obvious. But there are legal issues which they [Council- my italics] are now looking at now that have to be put in place, so there is the legal side of it." Interview 3, Western Isles)

The emphasis on using local labour without compromising quality was also identified by another stakeholder:

"Well, we have obviously a number of contractors that we are working with and that we have been kind of working creatively about how we procure stuff and trying to get local contractors, because we would rather have local contractors doing the work, but they need to be raising their standards, and they need to be helping themselves... in quality control... managing their fleet or whatever the issues might be." (Interview 2, Western Isles)

The role of self-help and the private sector

The presence of a strong sense of community and an emphasis on self-help in remote rural areas such as the Western Isles has been highlighted by previous research (e.g. Chaplin, 2010; Hirsch et al., 2013). This was also cited by Stakeholders in relation to the action of one retailer who unilaterally decided to reduce his petrol and diesel prices making the price of fuel more comparable to what people pay on the mainland :

“One of the local retailers here came out of the contract and is sourcing fuel at much lower prices, Petrol now costs the best part of 10p a litre less, which is a huge difference. Diesel prices less. But prices now are comparative to mainland prices for petrol and all the other retailers have kind of followed suit, not as low. But the prices are now on a par with the mainland.” (Interview 6, Western Isles)

Other opportunities for reducing fuel costs in relation to domestic fuel also cited included the potential for setting up fuel buying clubs for heating oil. Overall the opportunities to focus on self –help initiatives were identified as potentially strong as well as more appropriate:

“You know we have an opportunity to have that kind of self-help, and community help has much more scope to be a model and it could be made to work more easily than big infrastructure. So that kind of thing where people can save significant amounts of money that is then freed up for spending in the local economy, which then generates jobs. So these issues are linked.” (Interview 3, Western Isles)

7 Policy implications and further research

This chapter identifies some of the policy and practical implications that have emerged from the case study, which may have a resonance for other areas facing similar challenges, as well as identifying areas for further research.

7.1 Validity of European-wide data from local perspectives

At present the EU 2020 monitoring indicators for poverty and social exclusion for the UK are available only at NUTS 1 (the at risk of poverty rate) and NUTS 0 (low work intensity and severe deprivation). An average for the whole of Scotland or for the UK as a whole is manifestly inadequate to convey anything of the specific situation and needs of a region such as the Western Isles.

Overall stakeholders felt that EU data and map, and NUTS 1 level data in particular, were not sufficiently tuned to poverty and social exclusion as 'relative' concepts or to the regional and local contexts. To a large extent which NUTS unit was emphasised as important with regard to the availability of data for policy purposes depended on the geographical area/s being covered by the governance mechanisms or organisations that stakeholders were involved in.

National analysis has recently provided income poverty rates to the NUTS 3 level, and even for smaller areas. The estimated At Risk of Poverty (ARoP) rate (before housing costs) of the Western Isles ranks sixth in Scotland, at 21.6% in 2008/9 (Bramley and Watkins, 2013, p. 26³). The World Bank PovMap methodology estimates carried out within the context of the TIPSE project ranked the Western Isles as the second highest, in terms of ARoP rate, both before and after housing costs.

However the Bramley and Watkins data was at the time of the case study survey work, not yet widely known in the local government context in Scotland. Obtaining accurate data on poverty and social exclusion at a local authority level and below was still perceived as a major challenge. There was a feeling that current measures of poverty and social exclusion used in policy making tend to emphasise spatial concentration, underestimating the prevalence of poverty and social exclusion in rural areas such as the Western Isles which are characterised by dispersed populations. In the Scottish context, although very few rural areas fall within the most deprived zones (according to the SIMD); it is widely acknowledged that this does not mean rural deprivation does not exist. Among the stakeholders there was a perceived need for comprehensive and relevant good quality national/regional and local data on population trends, but also data related to poverty and social exclusion, to enable the development of 'evidence based' policies which can be monitored and

³ <http://register.scotstat.org/scotstat/2013/19/28/e87f0b8e-c14d-4ac7-8814-a18f010bb36b> ; <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Equality/Equalities>

evaluated. Stakeholders identified the need for more data at the regional/local level to assist them with devising appropriate policies and interventions on poverty and social exclusion.

Since the interviews were carried out small area data for the 2011 Population Census has become available online. This is in addition to the Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics website, which is a relatively rich source of socio-economic indicators which may be extracted or mapped at a datazone level (6,500 of these in Scotland). It is hard to escape the conclusion that the main problem is no longer a shortage of small area data, but of the skills to extract, analyse and interpret it, within the policy practitioner community.

Nevertheless, given the complex nature of poverty and social exclusion and the relationship with place, there is no cause for complacency. Consideration needs to be given to supplementing geographical measures of poverty and social conclusion with household based data. In addition there is also a need for more longitudinal data to track changes over time. This, however, assumes an agreement on indicators to be used and a framework which encompasses the multidimensional aspects of poverty and social exclusion taking into account spatial contexts. Greater consideration also requires to be given to not only making data more accessible to policy makers, working at varying levels, but also enhancing their capacity to use data and research evidence more effectively for policy making.

A specific, but nonetheless very important issue relating to the definition of the first of the EU 2020 monitoring indicators, the ARoP rate has been highlighted by the Minimum Income Standard research (see Section 4.2). The inadequacy of income poverty measures has already been recognised by those who argue for the “after housing cost” adjustment. They argue that the principal determinant of systematic variations in the cost of living is housing cost, and that these are particularly high in regions with a shortage of accommodation, usually large cities. Indeed experimentation with adjustment for housing cost (in the context of the UK PovMap analysis) showed that ARoP rates in larger cities were shifted upwards. The findings of the minimum income standard research described above suggest that the rationale for adjusting for the increase in cost of living associated with remote regions is at least as compelling. Although the practicalities of implementing such an adjustment, (data sources) are rather problematic the point to be taken from this is that geographical variations in income distribution tell only part of the story of poverty – differences in living costs are also important. The standard ARoP rate probably underestimates the incidence of poverty in regions where living cost are likely to be higher, and remote regions are just as likely to be affected as large urban ones.

Finally, as changes in the State Welfare System are rolled out there is a need to track the impact of these changes across different spatial contexts. It is also important to explore and evaluate the extent to which current typologies of welfare regimes accurately reflect the evolving welfare regimes in countries such as the UK.

7.2 'Holistic' and joined up working

The governance arrangements can work against addressing poverty and social exclusion holistically. For instance measures for encouraging household adoption of microgeneration to address fuel efficiency through financial incentives (mainly taken up by middle to higher income households) might help to meet climate change targets whilst resulting in higher fuel costs for those on low incomes leading to fuel poverty. The emphasis on the multidimensional aspects of social exclusion in this case study – i.e. disadvantage or exclusion in one aspect of life might be linked to a number of others – suggests that there is a need for more holistic and multiagency approaches to policy making and implementation to avoid contradictory impacts of varying policies. This will require less of a 'silo' mentality, and more partnership and joint working with policy makers and decision makers, as well as importantly with those experiencing poverty and social exclusion. Partnership working as well as more integrated strategies for addressing poverty and social exclusion have to go beyond local levels to include agencies and stakeholders at all levels of government (see for example Shucksmith 2012) Strong leadership at all levels of governance is an important prerequisite for facilitating change.

7.3 Remoteness and rurality

Policies need to be sensitive to the additional challenges that remoteness/rurality might create in terms of additional costs and in accessing services and employment. Despite investments in technological infrastructure (e.g. broadband) the experiences of the Western Isles and other remote rural areas suggest that there continue to be problems with regard to two issues: the quality of service in terms of low broadband width; and some groups continue to be digitally excluded, e.g. older people (Hirsch et al., 2013). There has been a general neglect in policy making with regard to the needs of older people in relation to Information Communication Technologies in what has been described as 'a youth-driven IT industry' (Hannon and Bradwell, 2007 cited in Burholt and Dobbs, 2012, p. 438). It is vital to address the evidence gap regarding access issues, as well as attitudes, skills and behaviours related to adoption of technologies such as the internet amongst older people if they are not to be socially excluded in a wider sense.

In addition there is also a need to develop a more informed understanding of the opportunities and the constraints for market based and third sector based solutions (especially where the emphasis is on reducing costs) respectively, to the provision of public services (e.g. care homes), and to understand the role of self-help and community based solutions towards service delivery and the ownership of assets (such as land and renewables) in addressing poverty and exclusion in remote rural communities.

7.4 Targeting vs non targeted approaches

The question of targeted versus non targeted approaches need to be given careful consideration. Targeting of groups can be problematic due to: the assumptions of

homogeneity; it can lead to the stigmatisation of particular groups which may be amplified in small communities; and can draw attention away from structural factors that require to be addressed. It is important that policies and approaches recognise that poverty and social exclusion are dynamic processes that change over a life course.

7.5 Participatory approaches

Policies need to be sensitive to the prevailing cultural and social attitudes and promote more participatory and non-stigmatising approaches to research and developing appropriate policies and solutions to poverty and social exclusion. Although there are benefits from the small and sometimes tight knit nature of communities there are also issues related to exercise of power that may make it difficult for all voices to be heard. This suggests a need to be sensitive to who and how varying interest groups and their voices are heard and involved in policy making.

7.6 Transferability of results

Research findings from this Scottish case study suggests a number of similarities to research on poverty and social exclusion undertaken in relation to the Spanish case study for TIPSE, as well as remote and rural areas in the European Union and elsewhere (Bertolini and Peragine, 2009; Camarero et al., 2009; Farrington 2007; Philip et al., 2012; Shucksmith, 2000). The similarities centre around measurement, key drivers and impacts (each of these are briefly discussed below) which provide a strong basis for not only developing cross national research and addressing policy issues but also in sharing practices.

Issues that were consistently cited in this research and which also resonates with the literature on poverty and social exclusion in remote and rural areas (Bertolini and Peragine, 2009; Milbourne, 2004; Shucksmith, 2000) are: the inadequacy of spatial measures of poverty and social exclusion; and the challenges in measuring both phenomena in dispersed and sparsely populated contexts. These issues result in rendering those experiencing poverty and social exclusion in rural areas invisible and marginal to debates on poverty and social exclusion generally, as well as in rural development policies and initiatives.

Key drivers of poverty and social exclusion cited across national contexts in remote and rural areas can be broadly divided into three factors which combine to impact on rural areas and communities and households in various ways: those that are related to rurality in particular; those related to national policy drivers; and the impact of the economic crisis since 2008 and 'austerity' measures adopted. The key issues in relation to each are as follows:

- With regard to rurality, three consistently identified factors in the context of the Scottish and Spanish TIPSE case studies but also supported by research beyond these two areas (e.g. Bertolini and Peragine, 2009; Burholt and Dobbs, 2012; Camarero et al., 2008; Culliney, 2014; Jamieson and Groves, 2008) were:

geographical location and topographical features (remoteness /island); demographic trends (e.g. ageing, low fertility rates and high levels of youth migration); constrained labour markets; and travel distances.

- Some of the national policy drivers that appear to be relevant across different national contexts are the lack of sensitivity to rurality in mainstream policies related to service delivery , transport, labour market structures and local cultures in particular .
- Finally the economic crisis and the implementation of 'austerity' measures (e.g. withdrawal /centralisation of services; welfare benefit cuts, etc.) were identified by all those involved in the Scottish and Spanish cases studies, respectively, as exacerbating poverty and social exclusion in remote and rural areas. Thus reflecting trends across rural as well as urban areas (Scottish Government, 2013; Wilson et al., 2013).
- On the issue of impact the multidimensional aspects of poverty and social exclusion and the need to understand the varied impacts on different individuals/ groups and households (e.g. lack of access to essential services, high costs and so on) taking into account spatial context - i.e. rurality- was identified as critical by stakeholders in both the Scottish and Spanish case studies and supported by research cited in this report.

Whilst many of the key drivers and trends are common to rural areas across the ESPON space, many of the findings of this case study are transferable, at the same time it is clearly evident that the specific configuration of the policy response is subtly but strongly conditioned by the national and regional social and governance context. Policy options for any specific rural area will always be path dependent. Effective transfer of lessons learned, or good practice, requires that this contextual matrix is clearly communicated, and that any attempt at implementation elsewhere takes full account of local differences.

Understanding the specificities of poverty and social exclusion in remote and rural areas in more depth is important to ensure not only territorial cohesion across the EU, but also the development and implementation of appropriate policies in relation to areas facing similar challenges to ensure the sustainability of communities in remote and rural areas .

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Annex 1: Additional maps and tables

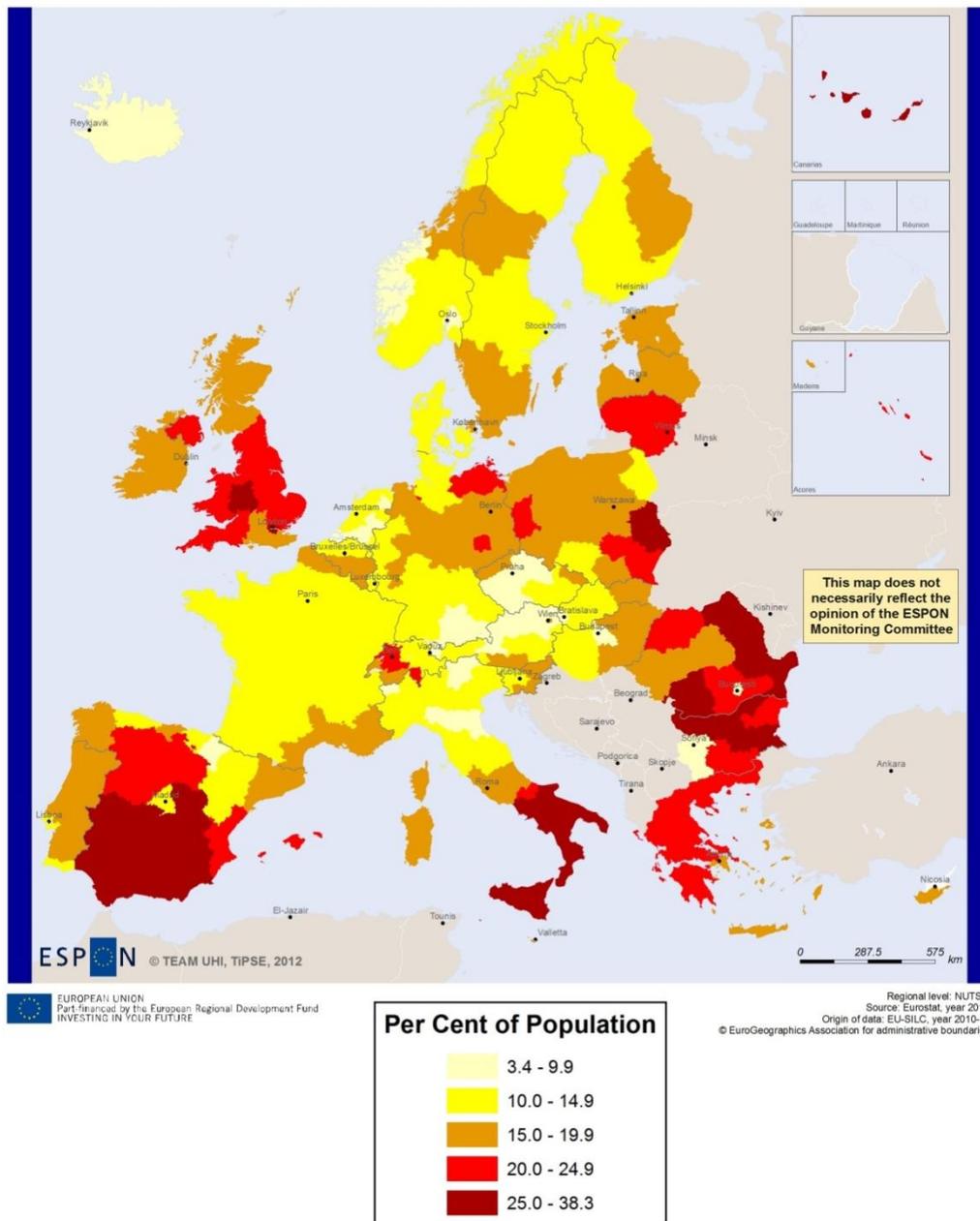


Figure 4: At-risk-of-poverty-rate (most recent data in each country)

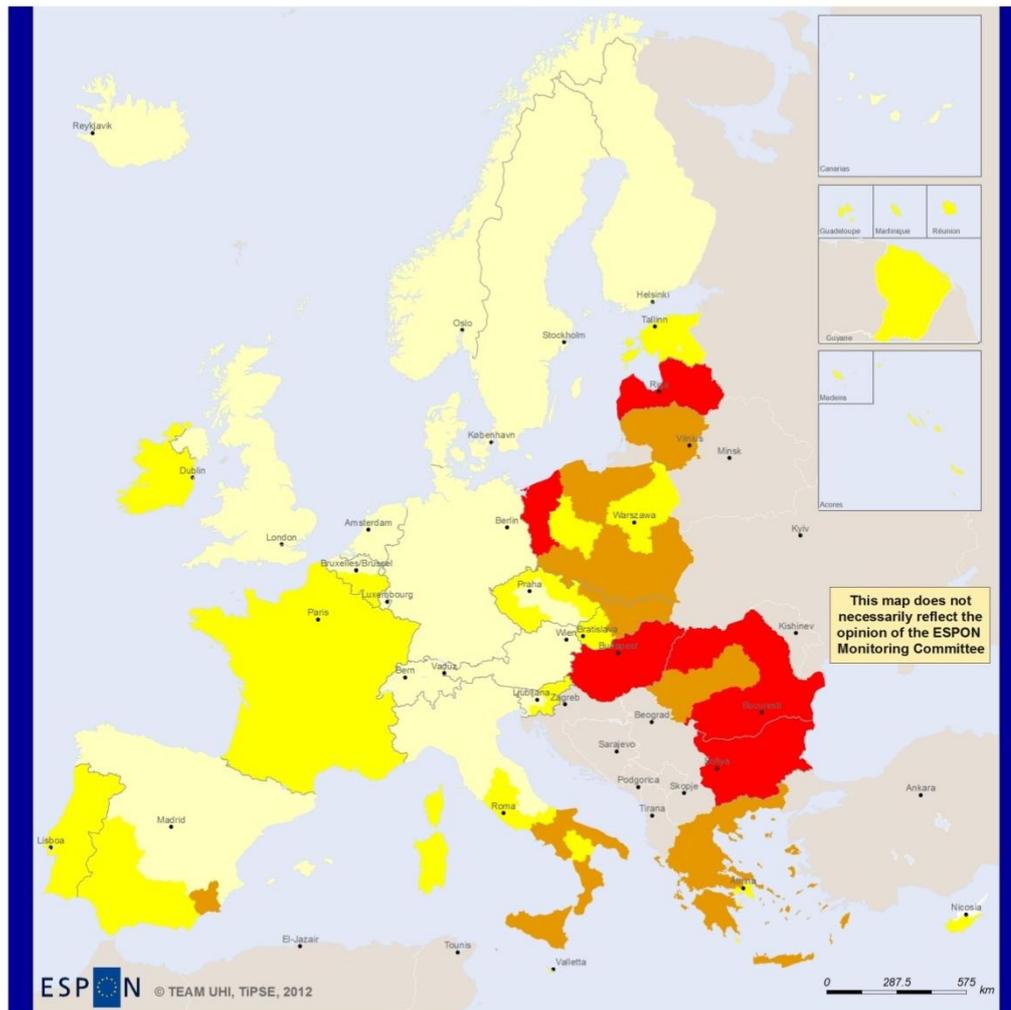
At Risk of Poverty Rate:

ilc-li41

Data availability by Country (updated 28/09/12)

	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	IS	NO	CH	HR	TR
NUTS	1	2	2	2	2	0	2	1	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	0	0
Year	10	10	11	10	10	11	10	10	11	10	10	10	11	11	10	11	10	10	11	11	10	11	11	10	11	11	10	10	11	10	10	06

The at risk of poverty rate is the percentage of the population living in households which have a disposable income less than 60% of the median for the country in which they live.




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Regional level: NUTS 2
 Source: Eurostat, year 2012
 Origin of data: EU-SILC, year 2010-11
 © EuroGeographics Association for administrative boundaries

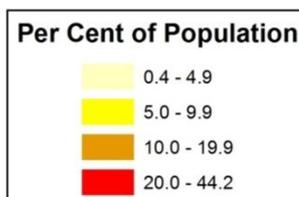


Figure 5: Severe deprivation rate (most recent data in each country)

Severe Material Deprivation Rate:

ilc-mddd21

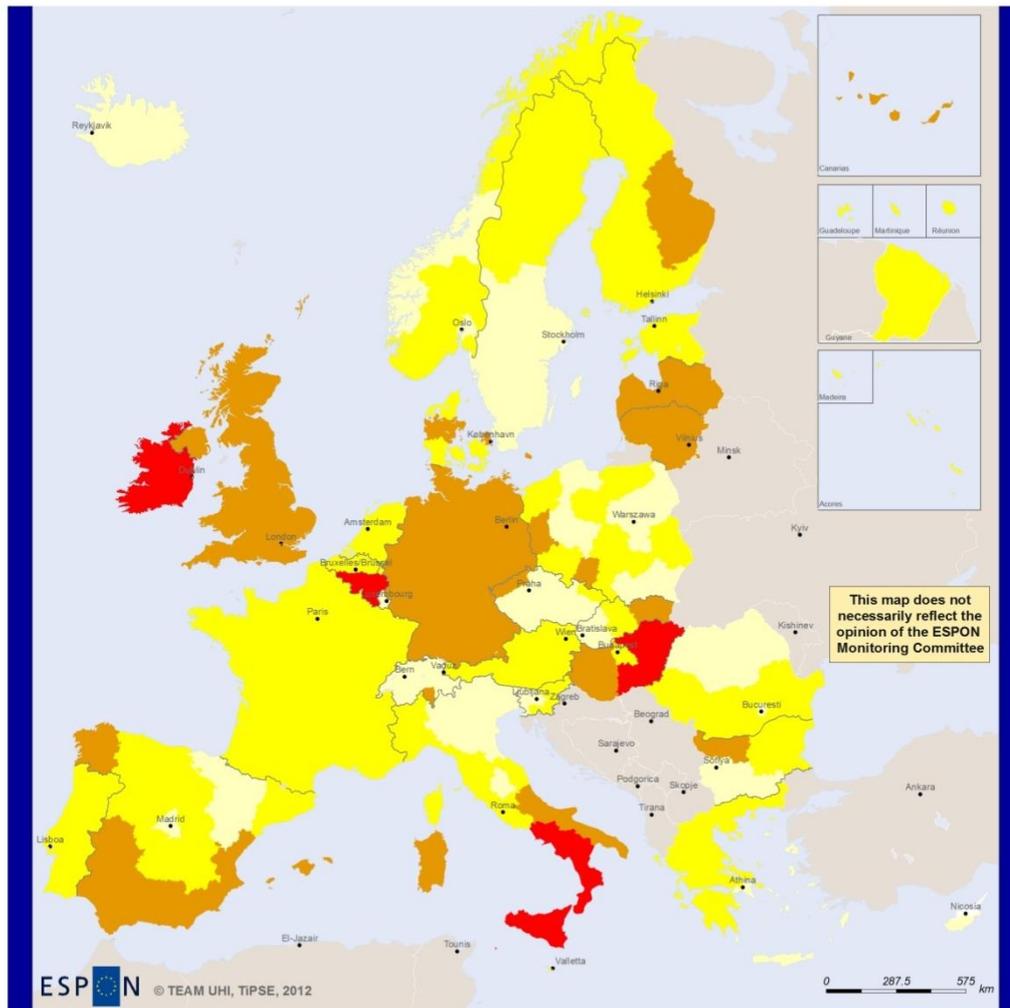
Data availability by Country (updated 28/09/12)

	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	IS	NO	CH	HR	TR
NUTS	1	2	2	2	0	0	2	1	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	0	0	2	2	0	
Year	10	10	11	10	10	11	10	10	11	10	10	10	11	11	10	11	10	10	11	11	10	11	11	10	11	11	10	10	11	10	10	

Severely deprived households are defined as those not able to afford four out of nine items which are associated with a minimum standard of living i.e.:

- i) able to face unexpected expenses;
- ii) one week annual holiday away from home;
- iii) able to pay for arrears (mortgage or rent, utility bills or hire purchase instalments);
- iv) a meal with meat, chicken or fish every second day;
- v) able to keep home adequately warm, or could not afford (even if wanted to):

- vi) a washing machine;
- vii) a colour TV;
- viii) a telephone;
- ix) a personal car.



ESPON © TEAM UHI, TIPSE, 2012

Regional level: NUTS 2
 Source: Eurostat, year 2012
 Origin of data: EU-SILC, year 2010-11
 © EuroGeographics Association for administrative boundaries

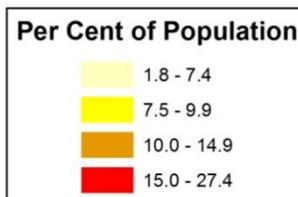


Figure 6: Low work intensity rate (most recent data in each country)

Low Work Intensity Rate:

ilc-lvii21

Data availability by Country (updated 28/09/12)

	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	IS	NO	CH	HR	TR
NUTS	1	2	2	2	0	0	2	1	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	0	0	2	2	0	
Year	10	10	11	10	10	11	10	10	11	10	10	10	11	11	10	11	10	10	11	11	10	11	11	10	11	11	10	10	11	10	10	

People living in households with very low work intensity are those aged 0-59 who live in households where on average the adults (aged 18-59) worked less than 20% of their total work potential during the past year.

Annex 2: List of interviewed experts

Institution	Role in dealing with poverty and/or social exclusion	Geographical/ political level
Western Isles Citizens Advice Service	Providing support, advice and representations on tribunals to a wide range of individuals experiencing poverty /social exclusion	Local Authority WI, with 4 offices across the Western Isles
Hebridean Housing Partnership (HPP)	Builds, manages and provides social housing	Local Authority-WI
CnES (Western Isles Council) Community Planning Partnership- Local Authority	Manager coordinates and manages Poverty Action group partnership activities	Local Authority-WI
Researcher	Previous role: Undertaken research focused on poverty and social exclusion as a PhD. Also other roles: active member of the Poverty Action Group in the Western Isles. Previously Head of health promotion partnership, National Health Service – Western Isles and board member Scottish Poverty Alliance	
National Health Service	Community development worker – healthy living and Board member of the Scottish Poverty Alliance	Local Authority-WI; and Scottish
CnES (Western Isles Council)_ two people interviewed	(1) Manager – Exchequer and revenue (2) Manages social funds – e.g. loans etc	Local Authority -WI
Poverty Action Group /Councillor- CnES	Political leadership and chair of the Poverty Action Group –Western Isles	Local Authority-WI
Credit Union	Financial services to all – though initiated to address financial exclusion by the local authority	Started in the Western Isles but now covers the Highlands and Islands
Scottish Government	Involved establishing and monitoring Scottish Policy with a remit for rural Scotland	Scotland

Annex 3: Interview topic schedule

1. Information about the interviewee

- Post
- Organisation
- Can you describe the nature of your involvement in poverty and social exclusion issues – [level of involvement: local, national, regional etc.]

2. Dimensions of poverty and social exclusion

Focus on impact of main demographic trends – aging, declining fertility and youth migration

- What are the main demographic challenges?
- What are the main challenges arising from these trends in the WI?
- Which groups are most affected by these trends?
- Sources of information /data used to identify trends etc
- Ask for : Research reports , grey literature etc.

3. Underlying processes and trends

- What are the main factors that increase the risk of social exclusion and poverty amongst: (a) older people ; (b) children and young people, (c) Other

Prompts - Particular challenges of living in remote rural areas/ Island communities

- | | |
|--|--|
| • Access to health and social services, social care | • Schooling /educational /training opportunities |
| • Housing conditions/ Inadequate housing | • Employment |
| • Early exit from labour market / employment issues | • Labour market constraints: lack of skilled work; seasonal /short term work; lack of well-paid work |
| • Access to broadband /IT | • Fuel costs – heating and transport |
| • Transport | • Political representation |
| • Lack of support for family carers | • Changes in entitlements to welfare |
| • Being in a single household (old male/ old female) | • Lack of coherent (youth) policies |
| • Isolation | • Alcoholism/drugs |

4. Policy and service delivery Issues at the Local Authority level

- What are the main challenges in addressing social exclusion in relation to: (a) older people; and (b) younger people
- What is the role of the agency/individual (in the context of their role) in addressing social exclusion and poverty?
- What are the main factors that shape the agency's responses in the WI to addressing social exclusion and poverty in relation to the two groups?

- What is the role of informal networks and campaigning groups in addressing social exclusion and poverty in the WI?
- Examples of initiatives established/being developed to address social exclusion and poverty in relation to the two groups.

5. Policy and service delivery issues at the Scottish Government level

- In what ways do Government (Scottish and UK) policies impact on addressing social exclusion in relation to the two groups at a local authority level? What impacts?
- Examples of nationally driven initiatives to address social exclusion and poverty issues in relation to the two groups.

6. How appropriate or meaningful for the Western Isles are the EU's official indicators of poverty and social exclusion?

Although our case study in the Western Isles is focused on issues relating to access to services, particularly among older people and with respect to young children, we would also like to ask your opinion about the official indicators which the EU uses to monitor and compare poverty and social exclusion in different Member States, and regions (and to measure progress towards EU2020 targets).

On the following pages we have mapped the three indicators, using data for the smallest available regions in each Member States. In some countries the indicators are available at NUTS 2, in others at NUTS 1 and for some there is only a national average.

We have also added a few notes to explain how the indicators are defined. We would like you to take a look at the three maps with the following questions in mind. We will discuss these with you for a few minutes during the interview.

1. To what extent do these indicators capture the nature of poverty and social exclusion in the Western Isles? What are their strengths and weaknesses?
2. What sort of indicator do you think would be likely to better capture the particular issues characteristic of the Western Isles?
3. What scale of geographic units would you suggest for this indicator, (bearing in mind the practicalities of collecting data across the EU Member States)?

Annex 4: Responsibilities and governance in relation to poverty and social exclusion

Policies related to poverty and social exclusion are shared by government agencies at different levels. The main government decision-making bodies are highlighted in the table below with web links for further information on their structures, competences, etc.

Levels /Unit	Further information
UK Government	https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/prime-ministers-office-10-downing-street http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/government-and-opposition1/her-majestys-government/
Scottish Government	http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About
Local Government	http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Government/local-government
Community Councils	http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Government/local-government/communitycouncils