



# **Poverty Leadership Panel (PLP) staff attitudes survey report**

**Baseline survey  
August 2014**

**Prepared for PLP by  
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## 1. Introduction

This survey formed part of the work of Glasgow's Poverty Leadership Panel (PLP)<sup>1</sup> in developing an action plan for change with regard to poverty in the city. One of the priorities of the Panel is to challenge negative attitudes towards people in poverty. The goals are to improve services and to ensure that people struggling against poverty are not stigmatised.

This baseline survey was carried out to understand the views and perceptions of staff across the city, who work with people struggling against poverty. These findings will help inform the ongoing work of the PLP in progressing the Action Plan for Change, and will be used specifically to identify information and support needs for staff.

## 2. The survey

### 2.1 Survey design and issue

The survey, using the online Survey Monkey software, was designed in collaboration with the members of a workstream focused on challenging negative attitudes about people in poverty on Glasgow's Action Plan for Change. Members of this subgroup are representative of a range of organisations and groups including the Wheatley Group, Glasgow City Council, the Glasgow Centre for Population Health, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, the Poverty Alliance, Oxfam, Glasgow Homelessness Network and the Poverty Truth Commission.

The choice of questions was the result of extended deliberation by all partners and, where possible, validated questions from other local and national surveys were used, such as the Glasgow Household Survey<sup>2</sup>, the British Social Attitudes Survey<sup>3</sup>, 'A Fairer NHS' staff survey<sup>4</sup> and the Wheatley Group 'All in' for tackling poverty survey<sup>5</sup>. This allowed comparison across the different populations targeted in these surveys.

The main purpose of the survey was to understand the views, attitudes and experiences of staff with regard to poverty and discrimination, as part of their day-to-day role, with a view to further planned action to help staff respond to these issues.

The survey was anonymised, and administered during June 2014 to all staff in Glasgow City Council, the Wheatley Group, Scottish Fire and Rescue service (Glasgow) and Police Scotland (Glasgow). Key contacts within each of these services emailed a link to the survey to all staff and paper copies were sent by post to Council staff without access to a workplace computer.

### 2.2 Data analysis

Data analysis of the online Survey Monkey questionnaires was carried out using the SPSS statistical software package. The Glasgow City Council postal questionnaires were manually input into Survey Monkey to facilitate simultaneous analysis. Analysis consisted of running frequencies for overall responses to each question, and cross-tabulations to elicit variations in responses between organisations. Free text responses were grouped into themes and used to further illustrate the quantitative results.

## 2.3 Survey findings

The findings in this report relate specifically to staff views and experiences of poverty and discrimination and are presented under the main headings used in the survey. These focused on participants' job roles, views on poverty, experiences of people in need, experiences of discrimination, as well as focusing on improving responses to people in need and experiencing discrimination, and awareness of the work of the Poverty Leadership Panel.

## 2.4 Response rate

In total, 3,510 members of staff submitted an online questionnaire. Of these 253 did not progress to answer any of the attitudes or experiences questions and were therefore eliminated from the data analysis, leaving a total of 3,257 valid responses. Table 1 gives a breakdown of responses by organisation.

**Table 1. Responses by organisation.**

Organisation	Number of responses	Percentage of total within each organisation	Number of questionnaires issued
Wheatley Group	492	25%	2,000
Scottish Fire and Rescue	57	9%	650
Police Scotland	114	4%	3,000
Glasgow City Council	2,330	10%	24,000
Prefer not to answer	153		
Missing	111		
<b>TOTAL RESPONSES</b>	<b>3,257</b>		<b>29,650</b>

One hundred and eleven responses failed to identify their organisation and, for the purpose of this report, will not be included in further comparisons. A further 153 chose the 'prefer not to answer option' to this question and were, therefore, also excluded from comparisons across organisations.

As the number of responses varied considerably between organisations, from 57 in the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to 2,330 in Glasgow City Council, comparisons of responses 'between organisations' to each question would yield skewed results. Therefore, all comparisons were carried out for 'within organisation' responses. Additionally, caution should be exercised in interpreting the findings from Police Scotland as responses from this organisation only reflect the views of 4% of staff.

## 3. Job role

Respondents were asked to provide details of their job role, to help understand the proportion of staff working in public-facing and non-customer facing roles and their potential contact with vulnerable groups of people. Categories were not mutually exclusive and, therefore, percentages for each question option do not add up to 100%.

The majority reported either face-to-face (66%; 2,132) and/or telephone contact (66%; 2,152) with the general public. Over half of respondents also indicated their roles involve mail contact with the general public (50%), working with ethnic minorities (50%), and working with people from deprived areas (53%).

Between 40% and 50% of responses related to working with people with a range of vulnerabilities, including disabilities (49%), mental health issues (47%), living in poverty (47%), unemployment (44%), addiction issues (42%), and lone parenthood (40%). Other staff also reported working with carers (37%) and young parents (36%). Fifty-one percent of staff indicated a non-customer-facing role.

Additional comments were offered to clarify the options chosen or to add other areas of work not accounted for in the question. A number of these referred to working with Council partners and services and with external businesses. Many comments also related to working with children and young people, the elderly, and adults with other conditions and vulnerabilities such as elderly people and people with dementia.

## 4. Views on poverty

Staff were asked their views on the level of poverty currently existing in Glasgow, whether they believe there has been a change in levels over the last ten years, and if they think a change is likely over the next ten years.

This section also included attitudinal questions on definitions of, and perceived causes of, poverty. Where comparisons to other surveys were possible, these are discussed within the relevant sections.

### 4.1 Levels of poverty in Glasgow

In terms of perceptions of the level of poverty in Glasgow today, the vast majority (96%) thought there is 'quite a lot' or 'a fair amount'. Between 0% and 2% either 'didn't know' or thought there was no poverty at all in Glasgow, while 3% thought there is very little.

**Table 2. Views on level of poverty in Glasgow today.**

Quite a lot	1,817	56%
A fair amount	1,265	39%
Very little	102	3%
None at all	4	0%
Don't know	63	2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,251</b>	<b>100%</b>

- Comparisons with other surveys

The perception that there is 'quite a lot' or 'a fair amount' of poverty in Glasgow, is similar to views found in other surveys such as the 2013 Glasgow Household Survey where 53% of residents thought there was 'quite a lot' of poverty in Glasgow and 36% said 'a fair amount'. The British Social Attitudes survey (2010-11) also found that a similar percentage of people (58%) thought there was 'quite a lot' of poverty in Britain in 2009, but in that survey, 39% of the public thought there was 'very little' poverty in Britain. This differs greatly from this survey and the 2013 Glasgow Household Survey where 3% and 8% respectively believed there was very little poverty in Glasgow.

Further analysis by individual organisations (Table 3) revealed that the majority of staff in the Wheatley Group (98%), Scottish Fire and Rescue (97%), Glasgow City Council (95%) and Police Scotland (86%) believed there is 'quite a lot' or 'a fair amount' of poverty in Glasgow. The view that there is 'very little' poverty in Glasgow was expressed by between 1% and 3% of the Wheatley Group, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and Glasgow City Council staff, while 13% of Police Scotland staff felt that there is very little poverty in Glasgow.

**Table 3. Views on levels of poverty in Glasgow by organisation.**

Organisation	Quite a lot	A fair amount	Very little	None at all	Don't know
Wheatley Group	62%	36%	1%	0%	1%
Scottish Fire and Rescue	44%	53%	2%	0%	2%
Police Scotland	35%	51%	13%	0%	1%
Glasgow City Council	57%	38%	3%	0%	2%
Prefer not to answer	48%	43%	6%	1%	2%

## 4.2 Perceived changes in poverty over the last ten years

In response to the question on whether staff thought there had been any change in levels of poverty in Glasgow over the last ten years, the majority of respondents (65%) believe that poverty has increased, while 8% think it has decreased. Almost one-fifth (18%) thought it had stayed the same.

## 4.3 Predicted change in poverty over the next ten years

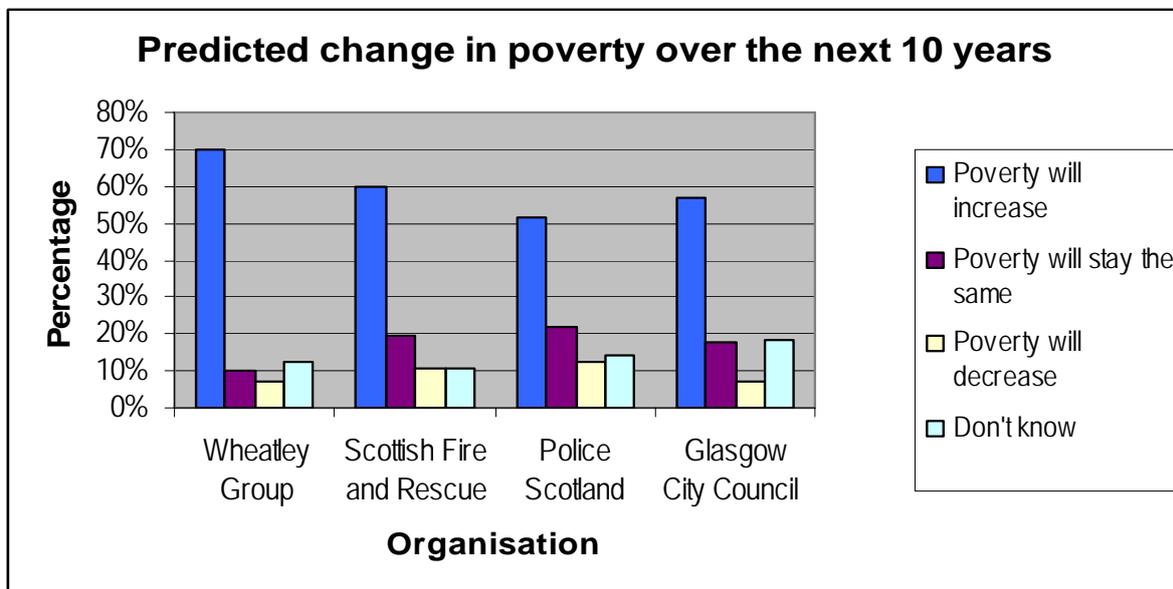
Staff were also asked their views on whether there will be any change in poverty over the next ten years. Almost two-thirds of respondents (59%) thought that poverty will increase compared with 8% who thought it would decrease. Less than one-fifth (17%) either believe it will stay the same or chose the 'don't know' option.

- Comparisons with other surveys

Slightly fewer people who participated in the 2010 British Social Attitudes survey expected poverty to increase in Britain (56%), while there was more optimism that it would decrease (11%) or remain the same (29%).

Looking at the differences across the organisations (Figure 1), the majority of the Wheatley Group (70%), Glasgow City Council (60%), Scottish Fire and Rescue (57%) and Police Scotland (51%) thought poverty will increase. The percentages who felt that poverty will stay the same ranged between 10% (Wheatley Group) and 22% (Police Scotland). Across all organisations, approximately one-in-seven believe that poverty will decrease.

**Figure 1: Predicted change in poverty over the next ten years.**



#### 4.4. Definitions of poverty

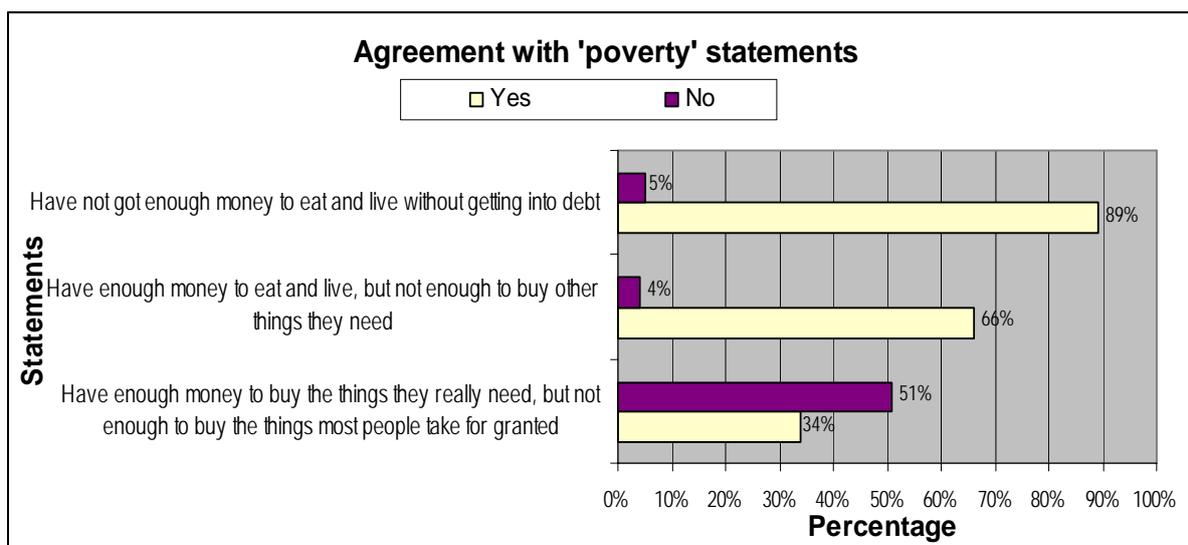
Staff were offered the following three statements defining poverty and asked whether they agreed or disagreed with each.

Someone is in poverty if they have...

- enough money to eat and live, but not to buy things most people take for granted.
- enough money to eat and live, but not to buy other things they need.
- not enough money to eat and live without getting into debt.

Figure 2 shows that, overall, 34% of staff (n=1,107) agreed that people are in poverty if they can afford 'to eat and live but not afford what other people take for granted'; 66% (2,154) agreed with the proposition that people who have 'enough money to eat and live but not enough to buy other things they need' are in poverty; and the majority (89%; 2,905) agreed that people are in poverty if they have 'not got enough money to eat and live without getting into debt'.

**Figure 2: Agreement with 'poverty' statements.**



- Comparison with other surveys

The percentages agreeing with each of the poverty statements very much mirror those found in the 2013 Glasgow Household Survey (GHS) of residents. Where a slight difference in staff and residents' opinions emerged was in relation to the definition that people are in poverty if they 'have enough money to eat and live but not to buy things most people take for granted'. A lower percentage of staff agreed with this than residents who completed the Glasgow Household Survey (34% compared with 41%).

#### 4.4.1 Definitions of poverty by organisation

An examination of responses within each organisation (Table 4) confirms the overall majority agreement that someone is in poverty if they 'have not got enough money to eat and live without getting into debt'. Between 91% and 95% of staff from all organisations agreed with this statement.

However, looking at the percentage disagreement with this statement, slightly higher percentages of staff in the Wheatley Group (8%) and Police Scotland (9%) felt that people in this circumstance are not in poverty, compared with 5% and 4% respectively in Glasgow City Council and Scottish Fire and Rescue service.

**Table 4. Views on definitions of poverty by organisation.**

Organisation	Enough money to eat and live, but not to buy things most people take for granted		Enough money to eat and live, but not to buy other things they need		Not enough money to eat and live without getting into debt	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Wheatley Group	37%	57%	70%	23%	91%	8%
Scottish Fire and Rescue	30%	62%	69%	26%	95%	4%
Police Scotland	25%	73%	60%	39%	91%	9%
Glasgow City Council	40%	55%	73%	23%	94%	5%
Prefer not to answer	31%	64%	71%	25%	94%	3%

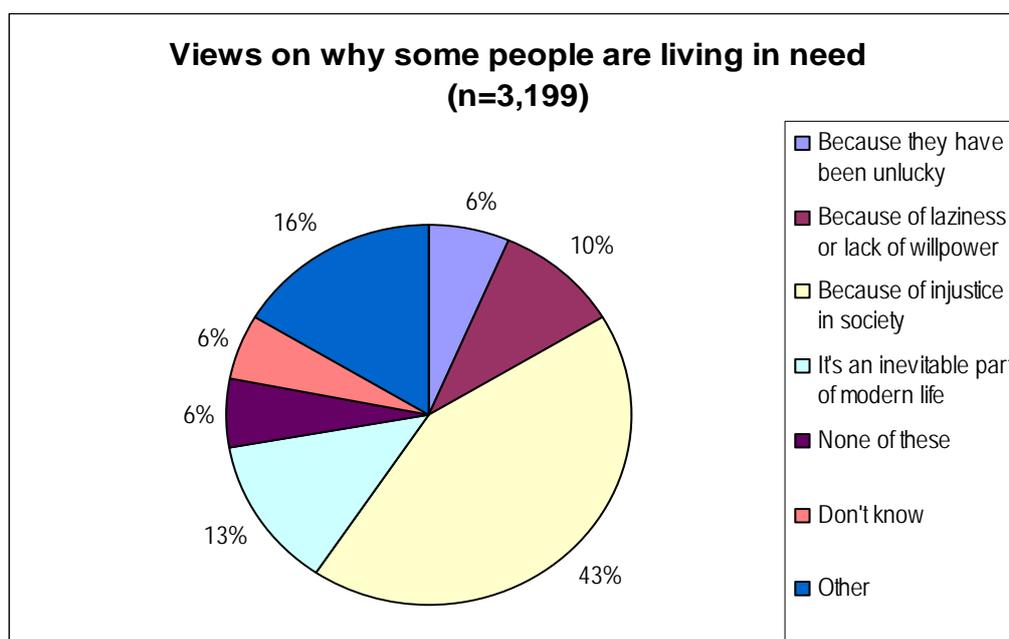
Note: percentages for each question do not add up to 100% as 'Don't know' responses are not included.

There was more variation in opinions about other definitions of poverty. For example, between 60% and 73% across all organisations thought that someone is in poverty if they 'have enough money to eat and live but not to buy other things they need', while disagreement with this statement was in the range of 23% to 39%.

#### 4.5 Perceived causes of poverty

In response to the question about why some people are living in need, the majority of staff (43%) chose 'Because of injustice in society' and 13% thought that living in need was 'an inevitable part of modern life'. Only 16% chose the two more 'individually-determined' explanations of why people live in need, i.e. 'laziness and lack of willpower' (10%) and 'unlucky' (6%) (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Views on why some people are living in need.**



- Comparisons with other survey findings:

The percentage who chose ‘injustice in society’ (43%) is very similar to the percentage of residents in the Glasgow Household Survey (40%) who selected this explanation, but lower than the findings of the 2013 NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde survey entitled ‘A Fairer NHS’ in which 55% of NHS staff believed that living in need is a result of injustice in society. This compares with a lower proportion of 21% of people participating in the British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey who attributed it to ‘injustice in society’.

Below is a breakdown of responses across the PLP staff survey, the Glasgow Household survey, the Wheatley Group ‘All in’ for tackling poverty survey 2 (carried out with users of third sector and housing organisations in Glasgow) and the BSA survey.

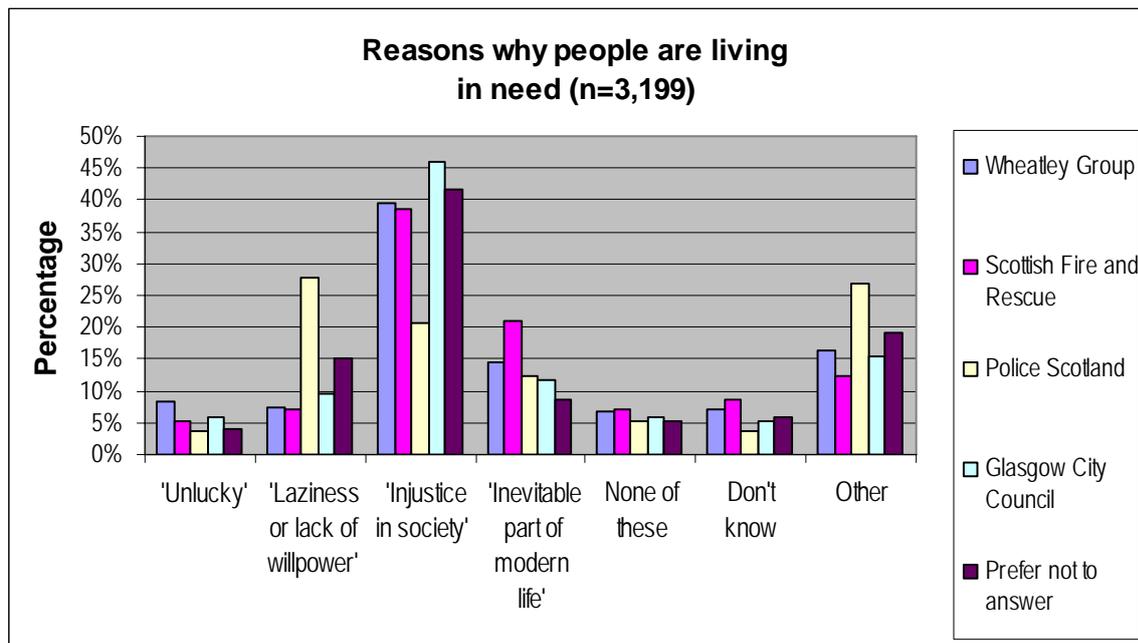
Lower percentages of respondents in the ‘All in’ survey 2 (9%) and this staff survey (10%) thought that ‘laziness and lack of willpower’ was a factor in determining need, compared with 21% of residents in the GHS and 23% of BSA survey participants. Across all surveys, the highest percentage of people in the BSA survey thought that poverty was ‘an inevitable part of modern life’ (35%). Similar percentages of between 13% and 15% attributed poverty to ‘being unlucky’ in this staff survey, the ‘All in’ survey and the BSA survey. However, only 8% of residents in the GHS thought it was a result of bad luck.

	<b>Staff survey</b>	<b>Glasgow Household Survey</b>	<b>‘All in’ poverty survey</b>	<b>BSA survey (2010)</b>
Injustice in society	43%	40%	40%	21%
Inevitable part of modern life	13%	19%	22%	35%
Laziness and lack of willpower	10%	21%	9%	21%
Unlucky	13%	8%	15%	13%

There were variations, however, in attitudes across the four organisations in this survey (see Figure 4). An average of 41% of respondents from the Wheatley Group, Scottish Fire and Rescue, and Glasgow City Council thought ‘injustice in society’ was a determinant of living in need, while half that percentage in the Police Service (21%) selected this option.

‘Laziness and lack of willpower’ was chosen by over one-in-five respondents in Police Scotland, compared with one-in-ten or fewer in the other three organisations. Responses were more evenly spread across the other explanations.

**Figure 4: Reasons why people are living in need by organisation.**



Additional analysis of comparisons between customer-facing and non-customer-facing staff revealed little or no difference in their views on why some people are living in need. The majority of both staff groups (57% and 53% respectively) attributed need to 'injustice in society', or 'an inevitable part of modern life', while 16% of both staff groups believed that it was due to being 'unlucky' or to 'laziness or lack of willpower'.

#### 4.5.1 Other comments

In the 'Other' category, a range of comments related to both structural and individual explanations of poverty. The most frequently-cited explanations were grouped into seven categories, each of which accounted for between 8% and 10% of all comments. These are outlined in Table 5.

**Table 5. Additional comments on causes of poverty.**

- Too complex to attribute to one cause (10%)	<i>"I believe everyone has individual circumstances – so while some people do not want to work, this is not true of everyone living in poverty. Often there are a set of circumstances rather than just one factor leading to a family living in poverty."</i>
- Combination of some or all of the survey choices (10%)	<i>"There are different ways that people can end up living in poverty some are through changes in circumstances like losing a job, marriage breakdowns and there are those that are raised in an environment where personal improvement is not encouraged and poverty is seen as the norm."</i>
- Generational patterns/family influences (10%)	<i>"Because of a culture of self-entitlement passed down from generation to generation, people believe the state owes them a living and don't take responsibility for their own actions."</i>
- Lack of employment/low pay (9%)	<i>"Unemployment levels, and lack of relevant skills for current employment opportunities."</i>
- Government policy/welfare state (9%)	<i>"Lack of genuine political will to tackle the issues of poverty, with little collective push from society in general."</i>
- Lack of education/resources (8%)	<i>"Because there is a lack of opportunity for many people who live in deprived areas. Education is not equally available."</i>
- Health/addiction issues (8%)	<i>"I believe addictions to drugs, gambling, nicotine, (to a lesser extent) and the consequences of excessive borrowing to be factors. Obviously the lack of gainful employment opportunities is a huge factor in addition to the above."</i>

Some general comments related to the social and structural determinants of poverty:  
*"Due to the multi-dimensional and persistent impact of deprivation and social inequality."*

Others related to individual explanations:  
*"In my broad experience, the vast amount of unemployable persons who spend a lifetime on benefits are extremely well looked after... they have expensive 'phone contracts, motability cars, large 3D televisions, Sky [television] contracts and spend a great deal of their benefits on alcohol and drugs."*

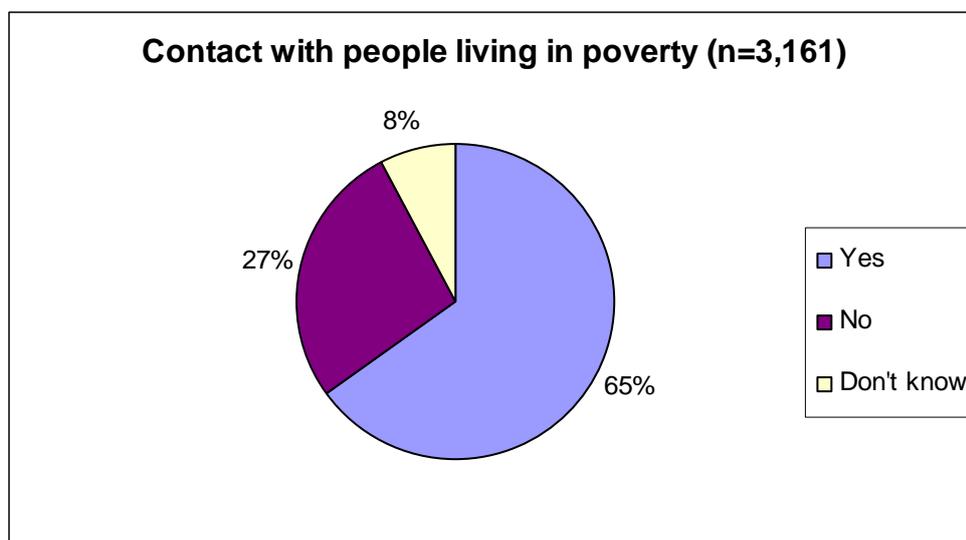
## 5. Experiences of dealing directly with people living in need

Questions in this section related to the day-to-day contact staff had with people living in poverty, and their awareness of the extent of poverty being experienced by clients.

### 5.1. Experiences of dealing directly with people living in need

Overall, the majority of staff (65%) reported having contact with people living in poverty and hardship, with 8% unsure if their role involves this (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Experiences of dealing directly with people living in need.**



### 5.2 Perceived extent of poverty experienced by clients

Staff were asked to choose on a scale from people in extreme poverty to nobody in poverty in order to get a sense of their daily exposure to poverty. Table 6 shows that a combined total of 64% of staff indicated contact with people who range from being 'at risk of poverty' to being in a 'situation of extreme poverty'. One-in-five staff reported no contact with people in these situations and a further 13% did not know if their clients included people in any of the situations listed.

**Table 6. Perceived extent of poverty experienced by clients.**

Client circumstances	Number (%)
Situation of extreme poverty	626 (19%)
Situation of poverty	981 (30%)
At risk of poverty	476 (15%)
Nobody in these situations	641 (20%)
Don't know	423 (13%)

### 5.3 Issues being raised by clients or members of the public

The survey sought information from staff on the current issues being raised by clients or members of the public. Respondents could choose from a number of options listed (see Table 7).

Over half of all responses related to benefits issues (56%), unemployment (50%) and stress and anxiety as a result of finance or employment (50%), respectively. A number of other topics were also raised and are listed below.

**Table 7. Issues being raised by clients.**

<b>Issues being raised by clients</b>	<b>Number (%)</b>
Benefits (reductions, sanctions, etc)	1,815 (56%)
Unemployment	1,640 (50%)
Stress/anxiety due to finance or employment	1,616 (50%)
Debts and money worries (unexpected bills, loans etc)	1,580 (49%)
Low pay	1,382 (42%)
Homelessness	1,248 (38%)
Childcare issues (including nursery), i.e. access to/cost of	1,144 (35%)
Food shortages at home	1,107 (34%)
Mortgage/rent payments	1,087 (33%)
Fuel poverty	1,073 (33%)

'Other' details were given in 139 (4%) cases. An analysis of these revealed that the most frequently recurring topics were:

- All or some of those listed (28)
- Physical and mental health and wellbeing (20)
- Access issues (to Social Welfare fund, health services, leisure facilities and knowledge of where to access help) (7)
- Offenders (criminal behaviour and violence due to poverty) (7)

A range of other issues encountered by staff included domestic abuse; colleagues and staff members raising these issues; housing, evictions and homelessness and effects on participation in education and school outings.

A number of comments referred to explanations arising from not having a customer-facing role. The most frequently-cited work roles included:

- providing support for internal services, staff or agencies
- working with external contractors, businesses, employers and investors
- legal work with other professionals

## **6. Experiences of discrimination**

This section explored staff views of dealing with discrimination on the part of clients and colleagues.

### **6.1 Discrimination by clients**

This question listed a number of protected characteristics under the Equality Act (2010) that may apply to people in contact with services<sup>1</sup>. For most of the protected characteristics listed, the majority of staff indicated that they would challenge clients who say something discriminatory about those people. However, slightly more staff indicated they would not challenge discrimination against 'people with addiction issues' (13%) and 'people whose first

<sup>1</sup> The Equality Act (2010) sets out personal characteristics that are protected by law, where people perceived to have one of the personal characteristics should be protected against discrimination.

language is not English' (12%). Between 7% and 11% of staff reported not knowing what they would do in the face of discrimination by clients (see Table 8).

**Table 8. Reported responses to discrimination by clients.**

	<b>Challenge them and discuss why you don't think what they said is appropriate</b>	<b>Report them to your manager</b>	<b>Not challenge or report them</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
People with physical disabilities	57%	11%	9%	7%
People with learning disabilities	57%	11%	9%	8%
People with mental health difficulties	56%	11%	9%	8%
Older people	55%	10%	11%	9%
People from ethnic minority communities	54%	12%	11%	9%
People living in poverty	54%	10%	11%	10%
Lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people	53%	11%	11%	9%
People with another religion/belief	53%	10%	11%	9%
People whose first language is not English	52%	11%	12%	10%
People with addiction issues	50%	10%	13%	11%

## 6.2 Discrimination by colleagues

In terms of staff responses to colleagues who say something discriminatory about the same groups of people, it appeared that, overall, they were more willing to challenge colleagues than clients.

Higher percentages reported challenging colleagues in relation to people with physical and learning disabilities, those with mental health difficulties and older people. In common with challenging clients, staff were slightly less likely to challenge colleagues' discrimination against people with addiction issues (10%) and people whose first language is not English (8%). They were also less likely to challenge colleagues about discrimination against people living in poverty (8%) and people with another religion/belief (8%) (see Table 9).

**Table 9. Reported responses to discrimination by colleagues.**

	<b>Challenge them and discuss why you don't think what they said is appropriate</b>	<b>Report them to your manager</b>	<b>Not challenge or report them</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
People from ethnic minority communities	59%	13%	7%	7%
People with physical disabilities	62%	13%	5%	6%
People with learning disabilities	61%	12%	6%	6%
People with mental health difficulties	61%	12%	6%	6%
Lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people	58%	12%	7%	7%
Older people	59%	11%	7%	7%
People with another religion/belief	58%	12%	8%	8%
People whose first language is not English	57%	12%	8%	8%
People living in poverty	59%	10%	8%	8%
People with addiction issues	55%	11%	10%	9%

## **7. Improving responses to people in need and those experiencing discrimination**

Questions under this heading related to staff's confidence in assisting vulnerable people, and their perceived support needs to enable them to provide services to people living in poverty and people experiencing discrimination.

### **7.1 Confidence in assisting vulnerable people**

Participants were asked how confident they feel when assisting people with the protected characteristics. Table 10 shows that the highest confidence levels were reported for assisting older people (75%), people in poverty (70%), those with another religion/belief (73%) and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people (72%).

Lower percentages indicated confidence in dealing with people whose first language is not English (55%), people with addiction issues (57%) and clients with mental health problems (58%).

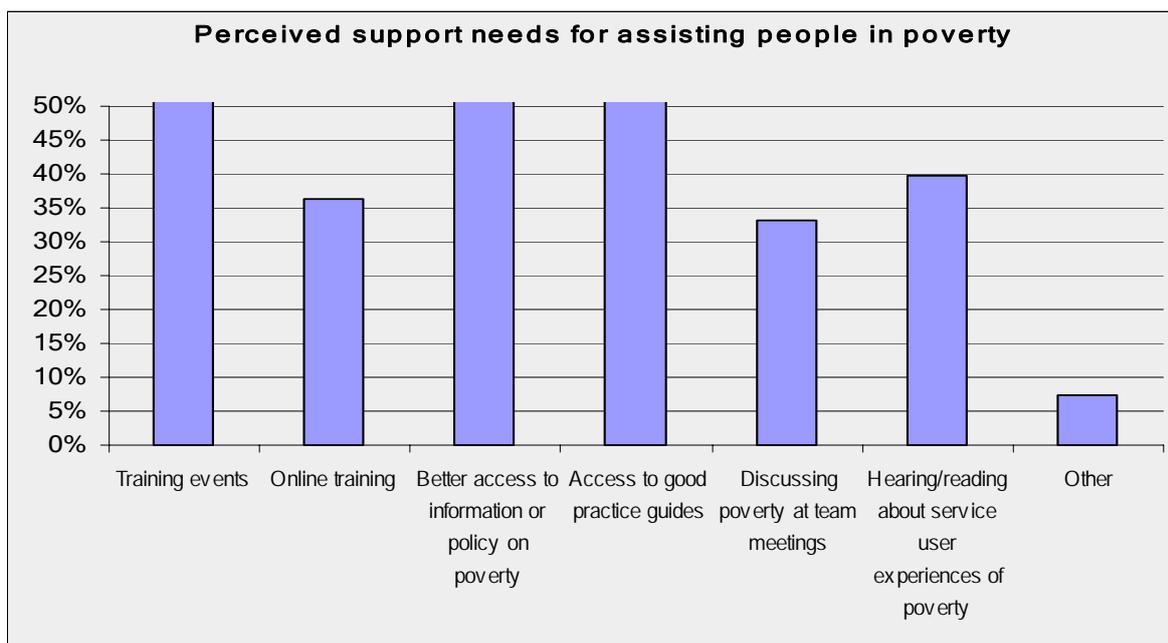
**Table 10. Confidence in assisting people with protected characteristics.**

	<b>Very confident or confident</b>	<b>Not very/not at all confident</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
People from ethnic minority communities	69%	9%	3%
People with physical disabilities	69%	9%	3%
People with learning disabilities	64%	14%	3%
People with mental health difficulties	58%	19%	4%
Lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people	72%	5%	4%
Older people	75%	2%	3%
People with another religion/belief	73%	4%	3%
People whose first language is not English	55%	22%	3%
People living in poverty	70%	8%	5%
People with addiction issues	57%	19%	5%

## 7.2. Perceived support needs to assist people experiencing poverty

When asked to choose from a range of options that would help them support people in poverty, the three most popular options were: better access to information or policy on poverty (46%); training events (45%) and access to good practice guides (45%). Forty percent of respondents also favoured hearing/reading about service-users' experiences of poverty (see Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Perceived support needs to assist people in poverty.**



A number of 'Other' comments could be grouped into three main categories. These are further illustrated by quotes from staff:

1. A shared understanding of poverty between organisations and partners. This was supported by calls for awareness-raising and training around the underlying structural determinants of poverty and a focus on the facts about living in poverty, using evidence-based approaches. This included comments on the need to involve people living in poverty in training workshops.

The following staff comments illustrate these views:

*“There is little public or professional awareness of the reasons for poverty”*

*“It’s not part of my remit to directly deal with people in poverty but... everyone could benefit from an awareness training course regardless...”*

*“Listening and understanding from people who actually experience poverty at first-hand”*

2. Strategic approaches to dealing with poverty in the form of more and better holistic, cross-team and cross-agency working. Comments included:

*“Being able to participate in sessions where experienced team members demonstrate how to support people (in poverty)”*

*“Better working relationships with other agencies...”*

*“Information on how to adopt a cross-departmental holistic approach to address the causes and effects of poverty”*

3. Access to information for signposting people to appropriate services. This included information about specific services such as financial inclusion, foodbanks, charities and so on; having a database of resources or services to refer to; and having named contacts within social work, the Department of Work and Pensions and Citizens Advice bureaux. For one respondent, this extended to:

*“the ability to refer a person to an organisation that could actually provide that person with financial, physical and emotional support”*

Additional issues raised included:

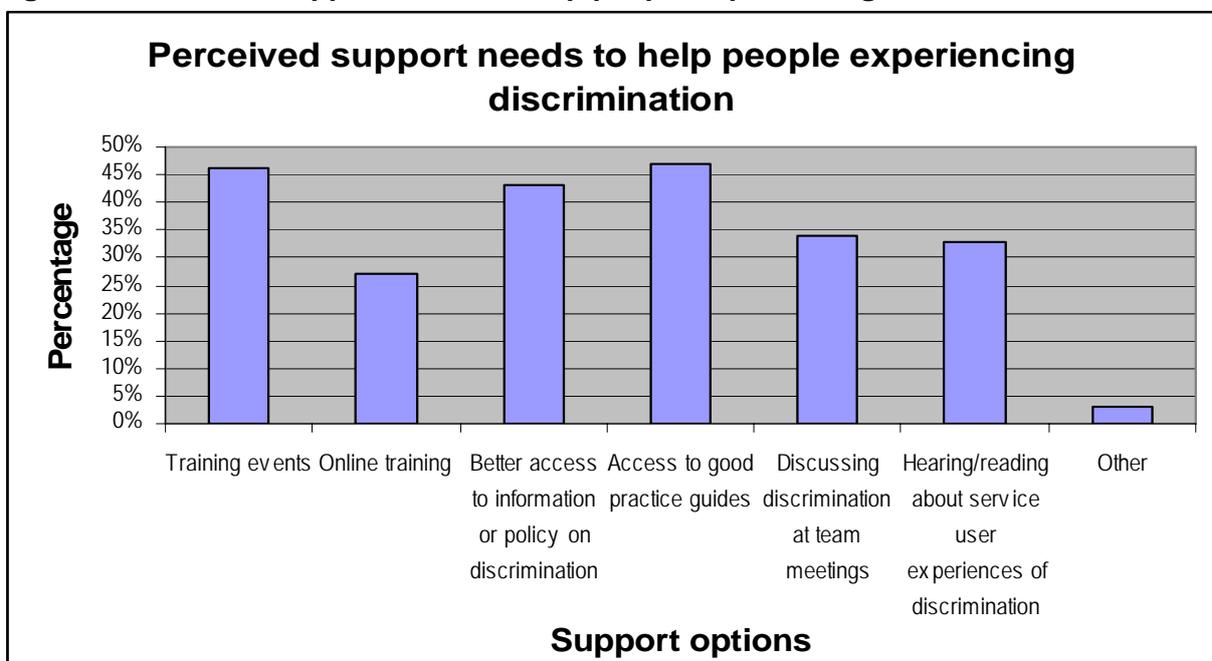
- the need for wider social and political changes, including redistribution of wealth, and reversal of current (and past) governments’ policies on welfare
- a more compassionate Social Fund application process
- putting poverty at the front of the public service agenda and employing more staff to work with people. There were some views that poverty is the remit of social work services
- more support for low-paid staff/colleagues who struggle, as there was an awareness that issues of poverty are not confined to clients.

There were no notable differences in expressed support needs between organisations.

### 7.3 Perceived support needs to help people experiencing discrimination

Staff were also asked if there was anything that would help them support people experiencing discrimination. Overall, training events (46%), access to good practice guides (47%) and better access to information or policy on discrimination (43%) were the most frequently-occurring choices, mirroring the options chosen in relation to supporting people in poverty (see Figure 7). Online training was the least favoured with only 27% choosing this. Over one-third also selected ‘Discussing discrimination at team meetings’ and ‘Hearing/reading about service-user experiences of discrimination’.

**Figure 7: Perceived support needs to help people experiencing discrimination.**



## 8. Awareness of the work of the Poverty Leadership Panel

As this survey was administered as part of the work of the Poverty Leadership Panel (PLP), staff were asked about their awareness of the PLP. Over two-thirds (70%) indicated not being aware of the PLP.

When looking at the awareness levels across each organisation (Figure 8), more Wheatley Group staff (28%) indicated knowledge of the work of the PLP than staff in the other three organisations. Across the other three organisations, awareness ranged from 11% among Glasgow City Council staff to 6% in Police Scotland and 5% in the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

**Figure 8: Staff awareness of the work of the Poverty Leadership Panel.**



## 9. Limitations of this study

Because of the differences in response rates between organisations, comparisons across organisations were not possible.

Additionally, due to the low response rates relative to the total staff numbers in Glasgow City Council (10%), Scottish Fire and Rescue (9%) and Police Scotland (4%), it is difficult to make claims about the representativeness of the data.

## 10. Discussion and conclusions

This study was carried out as part of the work of the Poverty Leadership Panel in identifying actions that can help organisations protect and promote the rights of all Glasgow's citizens. This survey sought information on the views and attitudes of staff towards people living in poverty or experiencing discrimination. It is intended that the survey will be repeated after a period of time to assess the ongoing influence of the PLP action plan for reducing poverty.

Overall, most staff roles involved direct contact with members of the public, either face-to-face or by telephone. This would potentially indicate high awareness of the issues people face and, indeed, the majority of staff agreed that there was either 'quite a lot' or 'a fair amount' of poverty in Glasgow today, and believed that poverty is likely to increase in the next ten years. The fact that lower percentages of staff in this survey thought there was 'very little' poverty in Britain, compared with respondents to the 2010 British Social Attitudes Survey is perhaps indicative of the changes in the intervening four years that have seen a substantial economic downturn accompanied by austerity measures. Many of the free-text comments associated with subsequent questions pointed to the view that unemployment and low pay are drivers of poverty, indicating recognition of the role of the current economic climate in shaping poverty.

The majority of staff felt that poverty could be explained by 'social' factors such as injustice in society and an inevitable part of modern life. The 43% who chose 'injustice in society' was very similar to the percentage of Glasgow Household Survey residents (40%) who selected this explanation, but, perhaps understandably, lower than the 55% of NHS GGC staff in the 2013 NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde survey entitled 'A Fairer NHS'.

In this survey, there were variations in attitudes within organisations, with more staff in some organisations attributing poverty to individual factors such as laziness or lack of willpower. At an organisational level, this could be due to the particular nature of the role being performed and the groups with which staff are in contact. At an individual level, some negative attitudes may be a result of individual experiences or perceptions based on current media narratives about low income and vulnerable people.

Nevertheless, these negative attitudes point to a need for a systematic approach to supporting staff, by raising awareness of the underlying determinants of poverty and the impact these have on people's life chances.

In terms of responses to discrimination, although most staff stated that they would challenge clients and colleagues who discriminate against vulnerable groups, this is not consistent across all vulnerable groups. For example 13% of staff would not challenge or report people discriminating against those whose first language is not English. In view of the fact that, in 2012, 15.8% of primary school children in Glasgow were recorded as having English as an additional language, and in some areas such as Pollokshields East, the figure is 65.7%<sup>6</sup>, there appears to be a pressing need to explore the barriers among staff and help increase awareness of inequalities-sensitive practice.

Additionally, this survey found that 12% would not challenge or report discrimination against people with addiction issues. This is worth bearing in mind in the context of Glasgow's high alcohol and drug use rates that are more marked in deprived areas, and their significant impacts on public health. The alcohol-related death rate in the most deprived areas is currently five times that found in the least deprived areas and in 2011, the rate of alcohol-related deaths in Glasgow was approximately twice that in Scotland as a whole<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, a better understanding is required about the particular nuances of these variations.

This survey has provided invaluable insights into the support needs that staff themselves have identified when dealing with clients or customers with various protected characteristics. For example, staff identified the need for a shared understanding of poverty between all partner organisations, strategic approaches to establishing cross-agency and team working in order to provide a more holistic service, and the provision of informational resources for onward signposting of clients for appropriate support.

The fact that 40% of respondents also favoured hearing/reading about service-users' experiences of poverty is an important finding, and lends weight to the aim in Glasgow's Action Plan for Change to "involve people with direct experience of poverty" in the process

and decisions shaping the plan. One of the key actions under this priority is to engage with people experiencing poverty about the services they use.

As challenging negative attitudes is a priority of the city's Action Plan for Change, raising awareness of poverty issues and offering appropriate support to staff to be able to respond to these issues will form part of the ongoing work of the Poverty Leadership Panel.

The results of this survey may also have some implications for other services, including the NHS, and may indicate a need to look more closely at integrated approaches to supporting particular vulnerable groups coming in contact with the NHS, such as those with addiction and mental health issues.

The lack of awareness of the Poverty Leadership Panel's work by the majority of these respondents indicates a need for action to rectify this.

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