

The event focused on how to tackle inequalities in a coordinated way, bringing together the three Scottish Government national frameworks to address inequalities. It reaffirmed Fife's commitment to tackling the inequalities which continue to exist and facilitated discussion, learning and sharing of best practice across Community Planning Partnerships in the east central region of Scotland.

This learning point provides a summary of the main issues, lessons and learning identified by participants at the event, as well as capturing the key lessons from presentations and workshop discussions. Speakers were as follows:

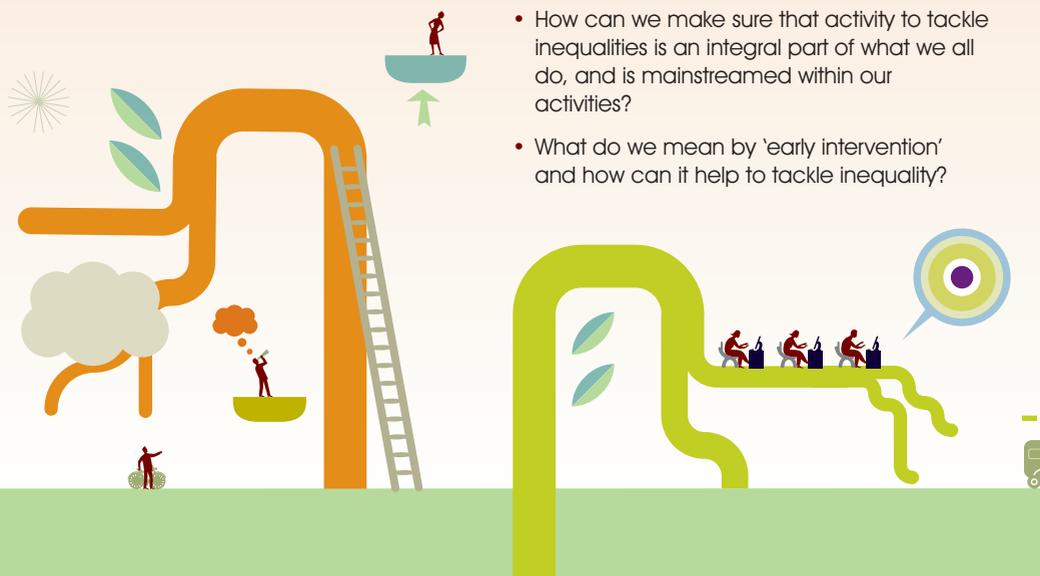
- Val Cox (Positive Futures Division, Scottish Government) provided an overview of the Scottish Government's approach to tackling inequalities.
- Eric Byiers (Local Community and Housing Services, Fife Council) reviewed how Fife Council and its partners were working to tackle inequality locally.
- Heather Smith (Community Regeneration and Tackling Poverty Learning Network Co-ordinator) outlined the role that the Learning Network could play.

➤ Workshop discussions focused on:

- Exploring the issues and challenges with the three Scottish Government frameworks to tackle inequality; and
- Discussing what is meant by 'early intervention'.

What are the important issues?

- The Scottish Government has introduced three national frameworks for tackling inequalities. How do we interpret and implement these national frameworks at a local level?
- Past approaches to tackling inequality have often been area-focused. How do we best target our activities to tackle inequality?
- Inequality is a complex issue, with many different organisations and individuals involved in tackling inequality. How can we best work together?
- The Scottish Government is increasingly focusing on outcomes. How do we assess and measure the difference that we are making?
- How do we make sure we address root causes of inequality rather than dealing with crises?
- How can we make sure that activity to tackle inequalities is an integral part of what we all do, and is mainstreamed within our activities?
- What do we mean by 'early intervention' and how can it help to tackle inequality?



- How do we make sure that activity is focused on the needs of the communities and individuals experiencing inequality?
- How can we learn from and improve on what we do at present?

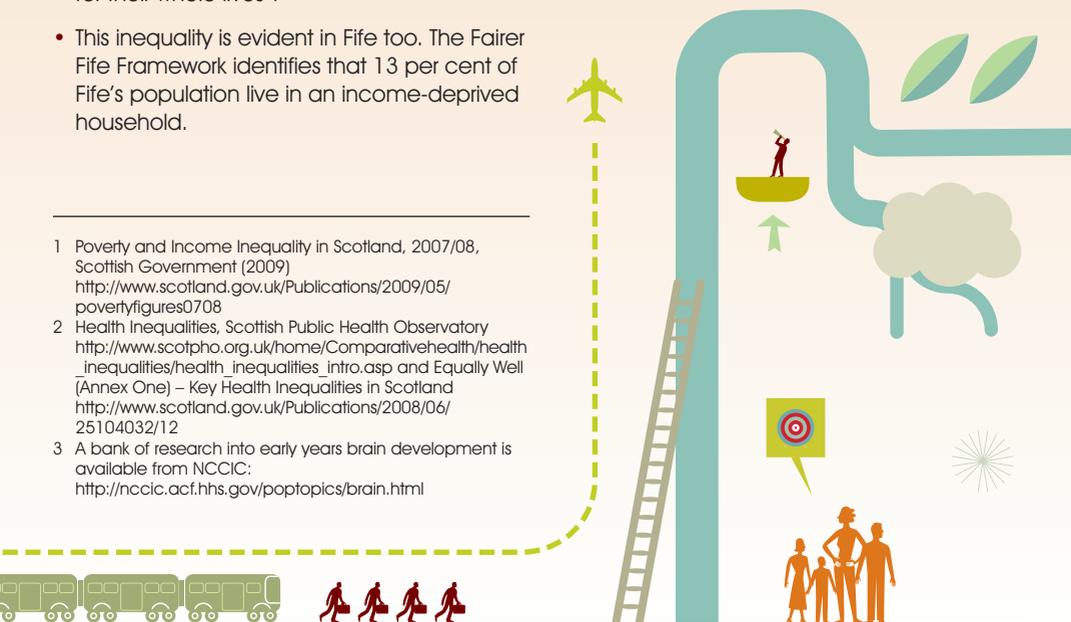
What is known already?

- Scotland is an unequal place. There are stark figures to demonstrate this.
- Income is unequal. For example, between 1997/98 and 2007/08 the poorest 30 per cent of people earned just 14 per cent of the total income in Scotland¹.
- Health is unequal. The poorest people are dying earlier – with clear differences in life expectancy between geographical areas across Scotland and between social classes².
- Opportunities are unequal from an early age. Many problems start early in life, and are intergenerational. For example, brain development in early age can be slower for vulnerable children, which has implications for their whole lives³.
- This inequality is evident in Fife too. The Fairer Fife Framework identifies that 13 per cent of Fife's population live in an income-deprived household.

- Since 1998, premature death rates among people living in the most disadvantaged life circumstances in Fife have been more than double those of people with the least disadvantaged circumstances⁴.
- There have been some improvements but there is still a need to tackle inequality across Scotland. As a result, the Scottish Government has introduced three national frameworks to tackle inequality:
 - **Achieving Our Potential** – to tackle poverty and income inequality
 - **Early Years** – to give children the best start in life
 - **Equally Well** – to tackle health inequalities
- These frameworks are closely linked to the Government's overarching purpose and have been developed in a mutually reinforcing way. Joint working and collaboration is central to the delivery of these frameworks.

4 A Fairer Fife Framework, 2008 – 2010, Tackling Inequalities, Poverty and Deprivation in Fife

- 1 Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland, 2007/08, Scottish Government (2009) <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/05/povertyfigures0708>
- 2 Health Inequalities, Scottish Public Health Observatory http://www.scotpho.org.uk/home/Comparativehealth/health_inequalities/health_inequalities_intro.asp and Equally Well (Annex One) – Key Health Inequalities in Scotland <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/06/25104032/12>
- 3 A bank of research into early years brain development is available from NCCIC: <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/poptopics/brain.html>



- The frameworks aim to influence the use of mainstream budgets to tackle inequality, as well as providing a structure for the use of targeted funds – like the Fairer Scotland Fund.
- The frameworks set out the broad approach to tackling inequalities across income, early years and health but are deliberately not prescriptive about how this should be done locally. In line with the Concordat between central and local government, local authorities and their partners must decide how they wish to interpret and take forward these frameworks locally.

“Only by doing all three will we achieve the transformational change we want to see.”
(Val Cox)

What have we learned?

➤ Awareness of the three inequality frameworks is not widespread:

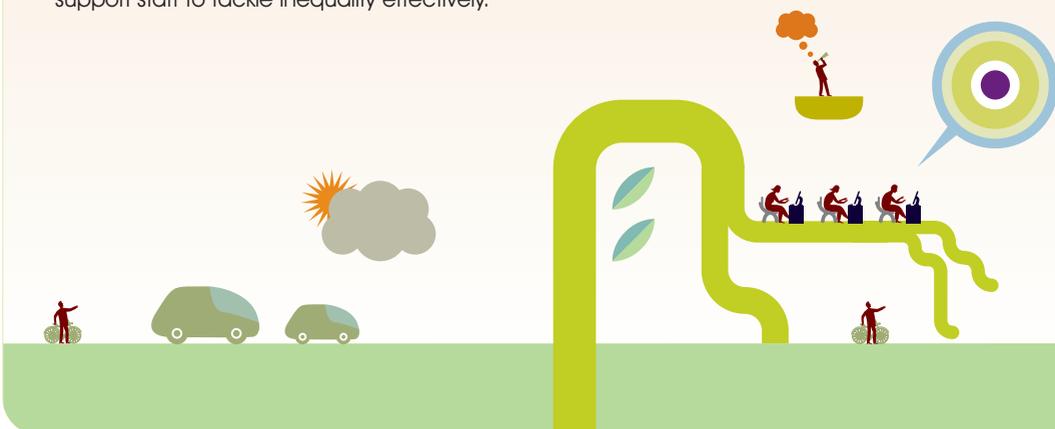
- There is some confusion about how the priorities of early years, health and income inequality link with other important issues such as housing and community safety.
- Having three separate frameworks may make it more difficult for people to fully understand the Government’s approach and priorities.
- The frameworks need to be interpreted and implemented at a local level. Senior leadership is required to drive change and support staff to tackle inequality effectively.

➤ Tackling inequality requires both area-focused and thematic activity:

- Activity to tackle inequality should focus on reducing the gap between the most disadvantaged individuals and the rest of the population.
- There are different ways to define the communities most at risk – for example by geographical area, by personal characteristics (such as age, gender or ethnic origin) or by life experience or life stage.
- There is a need for a balance between activity focused on disadvantaged areas – to break downward cycles, stigmatisation and long-term problems – and activity tackling issues across the whole Community Planning Partnership.

➤ Early intervention can help to tackle the root causes of inequality:

- Early intervention can mean focusing on early years activity, trying to prevent problems occurring later in life. It can also mean working with people of any age to address issues before they turn into problems.
- For both approaches, early intervention is proactive and preventative – not reactive. It means getting involved in sorting out problems or preventing poor outcomes as early as is appropriate to prevent crises from arising.



↳ Successful early intervention requires real decisions about priorities:

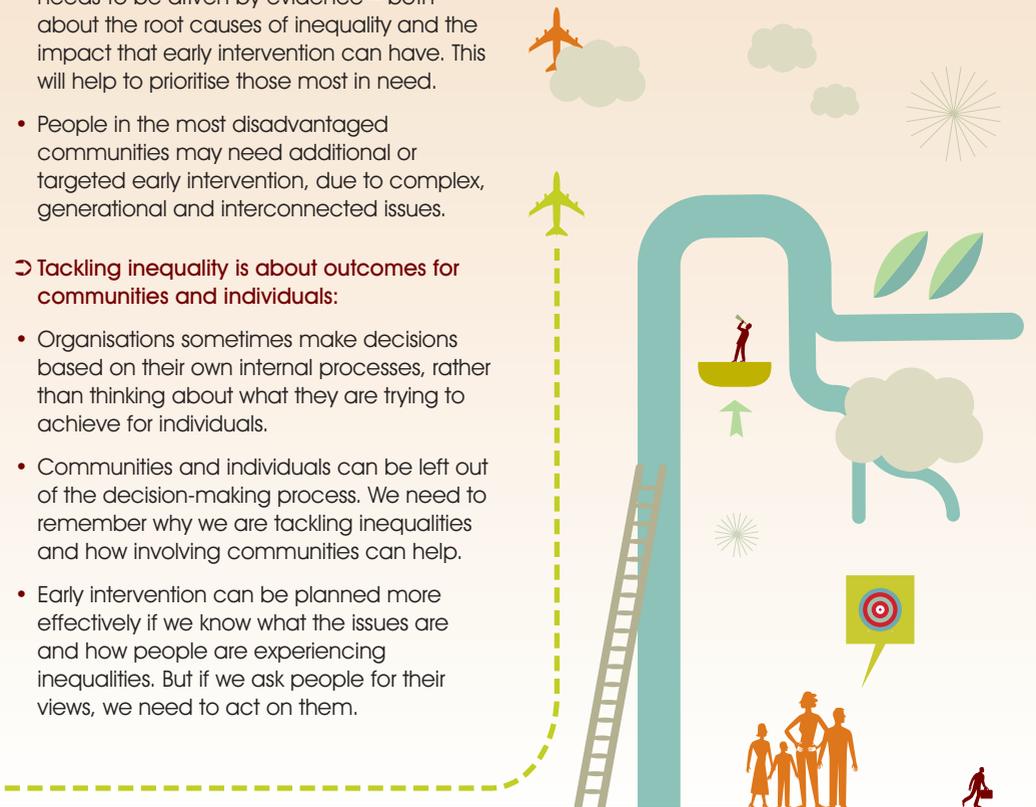
- A real focus on early intervention would require a significant shift in organisational culture. Currently, resources tend to be driven by reactive decisions, rather than proactive preventative measures.
- A focus on early intervention may require redirecting resources from crisis management. This would need to happen in a way which didn't disadvantage people experiencing difficulties now.
- It is important to change mindsets and increase awareness of the value of early intervention amongst policy makers, strategic decision makers and front line staff.
- For early intervention to be successful, it needs to be driven by evidence – both about the root causes of inequality and the impact that early intervention can have. This will help to prioritise those most in need.
- People in the most disadvantaged communities may need additional or targeted early intervention, due to complex, generational and interconnected issues.

↳ Tackling inequality is about outcomes for communities and individuals:

- Organisations sometimes make decisions based on their own internal processes, rather than thinking about what they are trying to achieve for individuals.
- Communities and individuals can be left out of the decision-making process. We need to remember why we are tackling inequalities and how involving communities can help.
- Early intervention can be planned more effectively if we know what the issues are and how people are experiencing inequalities. But if we ask people for their views, we need to act on them.

↳ Joint working continues to be a priority:

- Tackling inequalities requires joint working across the public and voluntary sectors, with all organisations taking ownership for tackling inequality. But it is important to balance this with ensuring that there is clear overall responsibility for leading and driving these agendas.
- Good communication between professionals is essential to identify issues at an early stage and break cycles of inequality. Effective referral and signposting systems are also needed.
- Effective joint working requires considerable investment of time. In a challenging financial climate there can be concerns over sharing resources and it can be difficult to dedicate time to partnership working.



- Organisations need to think beyond their own budgets and be willing to share resources with others to find the best ways of jointly tackling inequalities.

↳ **Measuring outcomes in tackling disadvantage is critical:**

- Tackling inequalities means addressing complex, entrenched and interconnected issues. Issues such as discrimination, stigma, lack of resilience and low aspirations can take a long time to address. This means we need to look to short, medium and long-term outcomes.
- The outcomes-focused approach is becoming a standard part of the way we work but setting meaningful outcomes can be challenging. There is a need for more interim outcomes – milestones to measure progress along the way.
- Harder (more quantitative) outcomes can be perceived as more important, but soft (qualitative) outcomes are useful too. Soft outcomes can be more difficult to measure, but provide valuable evidence.
- Outcomes should focus on reducing inequalities and not simply on improving the situation for all.
- We need to work to recognise and record how different organisations have contributed towards outcomes. This means we can attribute what activity actually resulted in positive outcomes.

- Dedicated funding for tackling inequality is useful but real change will only come about if organisations prioritise tackling inequality and use mainstream resources to do so (the Equally Well test site approach would be one example). Otherwise short-term funding and political cycles can mean that we are taking a short-term approach to tackling long-term problems.

↳ **We can learn lessons from our experience so far:**

- There is good work around tackling inequalities and early intervention in many fields, with clear evidence of the value of preventative work.
- We need to critically evaluate our performance and share our knowledge, expertise and learning from this. This includes talking about our failures, as well as our successes.
- Learning needs to be embedded in our ongoing activities. We need to keep investing in improving our activities, even if they are already doing well.
- The Community Regeneration and Tackling Poverty Learning Network has a key role in supporting us to learn from our experience and translate policy and strategy into activity on the ground.



What next?

The issues identified at this event will form part of a programme of activities for the Community Regeneration and Tackling Poverty Learning Network. This Learning Network supports Community Planning Partnerships, and their partners, to improve activity to regenerate communities and tackle poverty. It is led by the Scottish Centre for Regeneration, and links up with learning promoted by other parts of the Scottish Government.

The Learning Network will provide support and help people to exchange information and ideas. This will include organising further events to share good practice; identifying and publishing information about case studies of good practice; and developing other opportunities for sharing experiences through study visits and Action Learning Sets.

You can join the Learning Network online at www.partnersinregeneration.com or contact **Heather Smith**, Learning Network Co-ordinator, on 0141 271 3735.

Further information

○ About the Scottish Government approach to tackling inequality

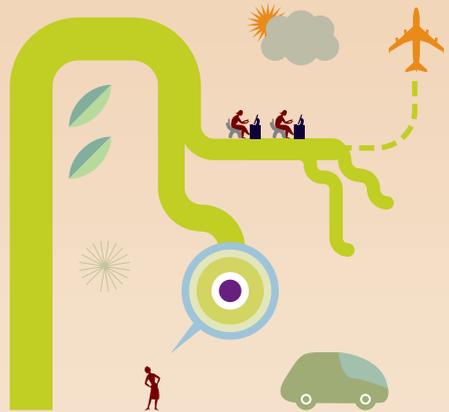
- The three national frameworks for tackling inequality are:
 - **Achieving Our Potential** – to tackle poverty and income inequality
 - **Early Years** – a framework to give children the best start in life
 - **Equally Well** – a framework for tackling health inequalities
- Other useful background information includes:
 - **Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland 2007/08**
 - **Tackling Multiple Deprivation in Communities: Considering the Evidence in Scotland 2008**
 - **Equally Well – Key Health Inequalities in Scotland**

○ About Fife Partnership's approach to tackling inequality

- **Know Fife dataset** – a wide range of information and statistics on Fife
- **Tackling Health Inequalities in Fife, 2004**
- To find out more about the Fairer Fife Framework contact **Robert McGregor** on 08451 555 555 (extension 442 263).

You can also see the full presentations from this event online at the **Learning Network's website**.





Scottish Centre for Regeneration

➤ This Learning Point is published by the Scottish Centre for Regeneration. The Centre is part of the Housing and Regeneration Directorate of Scottish Government. We help to achieve Scottish Government's Purpose, Targets and National Outcomes through supporting our public, private and voluntary sector delivery partners to become more effective at:

- regenerating communities and tackling poverty
- developing more successful town centres and high streets
- creating and managing mixed and sustainable communities.

➤ We do this through:

- coordinating learning networks which bring people together to identify the challenges they face in delivering regeneration and to support them to tackle these through organising events, networking and capacity building programmes
- identifying and sharing learning through undertaking research, developing capacity building tools and highlighting lessons learned and good practice
- developing partnerships with key players in the regeneration sector to ensure that our activities meet their needs and support their work.

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The views expressed in learning points are those of participants at various events and are not necessarily shared by their employers, the Scottish Centre for Regeneration (SCR) or the Scottish Government.

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