



The Robertson Trust Strategy 2020-2030

Overview



Over the ten-year period of this strategy, we want to build on our rich heritage, experience and knowledge as a funder to tackle the complex problems that face society today.

With our vision of a fair and compassionate Scotland where everyone is valued and able to flourish, we will focus our resources on two of the most significant challenges faced by communities across Scotland today: poverty and trauma.

At the heart of our strategy is a recognition of the heavy, but unnecessary, burden that poverty and/or trauma place on the physical, mental and material wellbeing of individuals, families and communities.

Poverty

Poverty can have a devastating impact on people's lives. Over and above the immediate financial hardship that people living with poverty experience, they also face stress, social isolation, shame and stigma. In the longer term, poverty affects people's health and wellbeing, limits their ability to live full and fulfilling lives and can lead to them experiencing a wide range of lifelong negative outcomes.



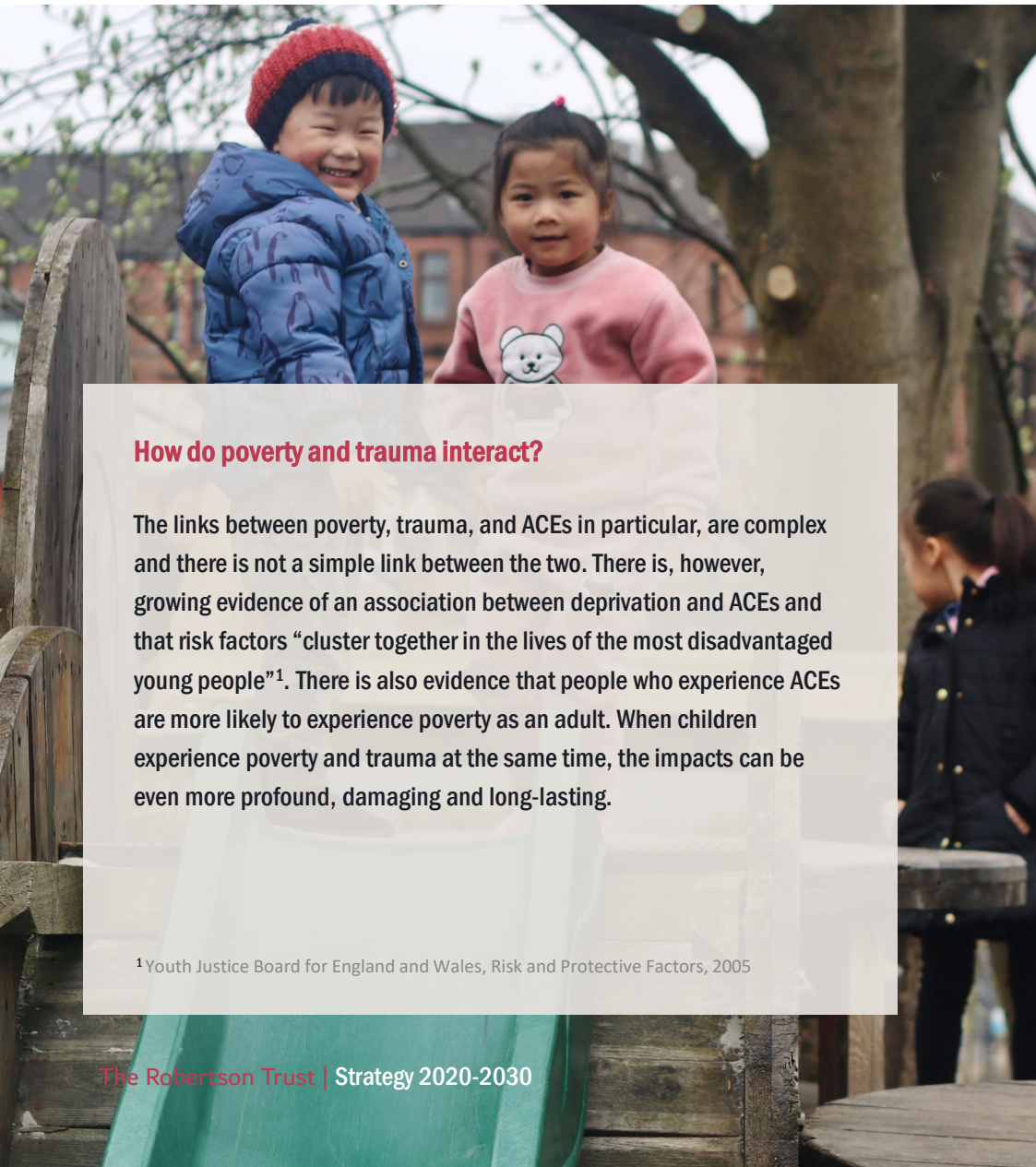
Poverty in Scotland

It is estimated that 17% of Scotland's population (910,000 people each year) were living in absolute poverty after housing costs in 2016-19.

During the same period, it is estimated that 24% of children (230,000 children each year) were living in relative poverty after housing costs.

Scottish Government, Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland 2016-19

Picture credit : Michael Jones



How do poverty and trauma interact?

The links between poverty, trauma, and ACEs in particular, are complex and there is not a simple link between the two. There is, however, growing evidence of an association between deprivation and ACEs and that risk factors “cluster together in the lives of the most disadvantaged young people”¹. There is also evidence that people who experience ACEs are more likely to experience poverty as an adult. When children experience poverty and trauma at the same time, the impacts can be even more profound, damaging and long-lasting.

¹Youth Justice Board for England and Wales, Risk and Protective Factors, 2005

Trauma

The last two decades have brought an increased understanding of how a person’s experience in childhood can affect them throughout their whole life. There is growing evidence that trauma, particularly when experienced during childhood, can impact on an individual’s long-term health, wellbeing, educational and life chances. Trauma can and does occur at all stages of life.

The toxic stress caused by childhood trauma (often referred to as Adverse Childhood Experiences or ACEs) can affect healthy brain development. There is also growing evidence that experiencing trauma as a child can bring about physiological changes to a person’s body as well. Indeed, there are links between ACEs and the likelihood of developing long-term health problems such as heart disease, stroke, cancer, and diabetes.

It is estimated that between 500,000 and 750,000 people in Scotland are affected by their Adverse Childhood Experiences

Our 2020-2030 strategy

Vision

A fair and compassionate Scotland where everyone is valued and able to flourish.

Values

We are ambitious

We are not afraid to take on difficult issues and will take risks in pursuit of positive change. We underpin our approach with curiosity, agility and a commitment to learning and continuous improvement.

We connect

We work collaboratively and are informed by the knowledge and experience of those we work with. We are compassionate in our interactions and value quality relationships based on honesty, understanding and support. Our independence is a valuable asset, but we recognise that working with others makes us all stronger.

We act with integrity

We take personal and collective responsibility for our actions and how we use our resources. We are trustworthy, consistent, and open about our successes and failings. We welcome challenge and feedback in order to improve our work.

Our role

We recognise that the world around us is changing at an unprecedented pace and that, in order for us to be of most use in this evolving landscape, we need to consider our role.

Over the course of this strategy we want to deliver positive value against our mission. Our work will focus on understanding who is doing good work, what is being achieved, where the barriers are and where there are opportunities to “break through”.

We aim to **fund** and **support** those finding solutions to poverty, trauma or both, by sharing our resources and using all of the tools at our disposal to do so. In turn we hope to **inform** our own work, and the wider policy and practice environment around poverty and trauma.



What we want to achieve

To fund

We will...

- fund organisations seeking to address the immediate needs of their communities in relation to poverty and trauma
- shift the focus of our work to organisations seeking to provide earlier help to people and communities, and which aim to improve the design and delivery of systems and services supporting people affected by poverty and trauma
- fund ambitiously and flexibly, encouraging communities to test and improve new approaches to addressing poverty and trauma and to do more of what works
- consider how we can use our financial resources innovatively to support our work through the adoption of different funding models.

To support

We will...

- consider how we can add value to support capacity, skills and capability within the organisations we fund, and the third sector more broadly
- amplify the voices and experiences of the people and organisations working around poverty and trauma and speak up on issues directly affecting the third sector's ability to address the root causes of poverty and trauma
- support the development of multi-agency initiatives and partnerships between organisations with shared goals, cultures and values
- develop our systems and processes to make it easier for organisations and communities to access our support and make the difference they want.

To inform

We will...

- build and share our understanding and learning around poverty and trauma, their causes, consequences and potential solutions
- utilise networking and convening opportunities to develop robust and open conversations around topics relating to our work
- identify where our work can best add value to the system in order to target our resources, developing programmes in identified areas that will build evidence around potential solutions to poverty and/or trauma
- continually review our own ways of working, culture, behaviours and processes in order to ensure that these fully reflect our stated values.



What we are interested in

Addressing the impacts of poverty and trauma

Addressing the financial and material effects of poverty on people and communities

At its heart, poverty is a problem rooted in a lack of access to financial resources. Existing evidence suggests that the best solutions to poverty include consideration of how to support people with their financial needs. We want to understand the drivers of financial need better, and to explore and support interventions and approaches which address the financial roots of poverty.

Ensuring people have emotional wellbeing and confidence and strength in their relationships with others

Having safe and secure environments and relationships can provide protection for people at risk of experiencing financial hardship and can prevent people from experiencing trauma. We want to understand how the relationships people experience, particularly as children, affect their health and wellbeing (both physical and mental). We also want to better understand the links between poverty and trauma.

Equipping people for the future through learning and skills pathways

Poor educational outcomes are a key indicator of experiencing poverty in later life, with work recognised as one of the best protections against poverty. We want to support initiatives which helps people to engage with and progress through education and into work as a key factor in reducing the risk of experiencing poverty.

What we are interested in

Groups affected by poverty and/or trauma



We know that certain groups of people, because of who they are, where they have come from or where they are now, are more likely to experience poverty or trauma, or both, often for extended periods of time.

We also know that the changing world we inhabit, and in particular the health crisis and economic crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic, increases the likelihood of more people experiencing poverty and trauma in Scotland in the decade that spans our strategy. Groups more likely to experience poverty more than others include women, older people, certain family groups, those

with disabilities, people from BAME backgrounds, those experiencing severe and multiple disadvantage and asylum seekers and refugees. We also recognise young people as being at increased risk of being adversely affected by changes to labour demand and access to education and skills development.

Approaches

Through our own experience and research, extensive stakeholder consultation and development of this strategy, we have identified a number of approaches and ways of working that we believe are likely to support positive outcomes for people experiencing poverty and trauma.

Over the course of the strategy we will be exploring how to embed these within our own work, and how others are using them. These include:



Community

Communities provide a crucial protective function for people by providing them with networks, relationships, support, services and often a sense of purpose. We want to champion the role of communities in addressing the challenges they face and are interested in how communities can be supported and resourced to develop their own solutions to poverty and/or trauma. Our primary focus will be on geographical communities.



Relationships and rights

We are interested in work that focusses on the specific needs and considers the rights of individuals. We will explore what this looks like by supporting organisations taking a relational approach to their work with a focus on the fundamental principles of fairness, dignity and respect.



Collaboration

The scale and complexity of the problems relating to poverty and trauma requires a joined up and collaborative approach, often across sectors. We are particularly interested in considering how systems can adapt and change to meet the needs of the people they serve, and how more work can be done to provide early help to people experiencing challenges related to poverty and trauma.

Delivering our strategy

Through our strategy we will **fund**, **support** and **inform** solutions to poverty and trauma using all of the tools at our disposal.

We will provide resources

We will continue to fund activities in communities through grants and provide financial and development support to young people wishing to pursue further and higher education.

However, we also want to focus more on enabling change at a system level and supporting interventions which engage and provide support earlier to prevent people experiencing the worst impacts of poverty and trauma in the first place.

We will explore other ways in which we can deploy our financial resources to support the efforts of organisations. This includes exploring alternative funding approaches, flexibility and duration of funding. We recognise communities, and the organisations working with them, are best placed to make decisions that will affect them, and we will always try to provide resources as close to communities as possible.



We will offer our perspective

As a national funder with a 60 year history of operating across Scotland, we have a distinct perspective around the challenges facing diverse communities. We will use our position and perspective to identify patterns, trends and issues to inform our own work, and that of those we work with. Our position as an independent funder also enables us to adapt quickly to changes we see around us, and be a catalyst for work which may be longer term, more challenging or come with a higher level of risk.

Delivering our strategy (continued)

We will share our platform and lend our voice

We will use our voice to support, inform, champion and inspire. We will seek to regularly share evidence and stories from our work and those we work alongside to support wider conversations around poverty, trauma and social change.

We will amplify the voices of others ensuring that the voices of individuals, communities and the organisations working with them, are heard.

We will share our knowledge and learning

We are committed to being curious, seeking out perspectives and building our own knowledge to inform our work. We welcome challenge and will use a range of evidence to inform our choices. We recognise the complexity of the world we operate in and are not looking for single answers, or the “right way”.

Instead we will make informed decisions, act and learn, review progress, adjust and act again, in a cycle of continuous improvement and decision-making. We will share our evidence and learning where relevant to support the work of others.

We will share our networks and build relationships

We will build diverse coalitions of partners who share our vision of a fair and compassionate society. Using our network, we will start discussions, make connections and encourage new voices into the conversation.

We will work alongside communities seeking to address poverty and trauma to identify where we can most effectively make a difference and add value. We will also acknowledge the power dynamics that can often exist when a funder is in the conversation and will work to address these, ensuring that we always use our influence responsibly.



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