

**Moray Citizens' Panel**  
**Fairer Scotland Fund Consultation**

**Report**

**by**

**Craigforth**

**AUGUST 2009**

## CONTENTS

### SUMMARY FINDINGS

<b>1.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
	Background and Objectives .....	1
	Approach and Participation.....	1
<b>2.</b>	<b>LOCAL POVERTY AND DEPRIVATION ISSUES</b>	<b>3</b>
	Employment and skills/ qualifications.....	3
	Substance misuse .....	5
	Rural nature of Moray .....	6
	Other relevant issues.....	7
<b>3.</b>	<b>ISSUES FOR PARTICULAR GROUPS</b>	<b>8</b>
	Geography.....	8
	Younger People.....	8
	Families .....	9
	Older People.....	10
<b>4.</b>	<b>TACKLING PROBLEMS OF POVERTY AND DEPRIVATION</b>	<b>11</b>
	Employment and skills/ qualifications.....	11
	Substance Misuse .....	12
	Rural Nature of Moray .....	13
	Other suggestions.....	14

## SUMMARY FINDINGS

The consultation identified a range of specific poverty and deprivation issues having a potentially significant impact on local communities, and ways in which the Fairer Scotland Fund could help to tackle these.

Specific issues identified included:

- In relation to employment and skills/ training...the main issues were around insufficient volume and range of employment opportunities, difficulties attracting new businesses to the area, job opportunities being dominated by less secure seasonal, part-time and casual work, and very low wage levels more generally.
- In relation to substance misuse...key issues were a need to tackle drug misuse as a “root cause” to significant problems for local communities, widespread alcohol misuse and excessive alcohol consumption contributing to health and other deprivation issues, and a lack of awareness of available services.
- In relation to the rural nature of Moray...key issues were Moray’s location and limited transport options limiting access to employment and wider social opportunities, and the loss of younger people (and related loss of skills and qualifications).

Throughout the consultation specific mention was made of particular groups as being vulnerable to poverty and deprivation. Specific vulnerable groups were residents in the Elgin and Buckie areas, younger people (poor employment opportunities and leisure/ social activities), families (reliance on lower paid insecure employment), and older people (difficulties accessing local services and amenities).

A range of suggested uses for the Fairer Scotland Fund emerged from the discussion of poverty and deprivation issues, including:

- Improving awareness of training opportunities, and potentially extending the range of opportunities available.
- More practical and financial assistance for individuals struggling to access training or employment opportunities
- Raising awareness of services and support for those affected by substance misuse.
- Local community liaisons or “community champions” to make public services more accessible to the public – for example in relation to substance misuse, child protection and reporting crime.
- Expanding existing services to better meet demand.
- Extending the current “dial-a-bus” service to improve geographical coverage, and possibly to include younger demographic groups.
- Providing a wider handyperson or tradesperson service for older people struggling with minor maintenance work around the home.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Background and Objectives

- 1.1. The Fairer Scotland Fund is a national fund aimed at tackling area-based and individual poverty and deprivation. The Fund brings together a range of previous funding sources, with the aim of developing and supporting sustainable solutions to the root causes of poverty and deprivation. Three specific objectives have been identified for the fund:
  - Regenerating the most disadvantaged communities;
  - Improving the life chances of individuals and groups experiencing poverty and disadvantage; and
  - Improving employability.
- 1.2. In Moray the Fairer Scotland Fund team works to ensure investment supports these objectives, and contributes to actions and outcomes set out in the Single Outcome Agreement for Moray.
- 1.3. An important aspect of the FSF team's management of the Fund is to ensure that investment is focused to tackle identified need within the community. To this end the Council commissioned Craigforth to undertake consultation with members of the Moray Citizens' Panel, as part of wider consultation being undertaken with other stakeholders.
- 1.4. The focus of the consultation was to gauge community views on the nature of local poverty and deprivation issues, and specifically to gather suggestions on how best the Fairer Scotland Fund can be used to tackle these.

### Approach and Participation

- 1.5. Four focus groups were held with Citizens' Panel members. Invitation letters were issued to all Panel members indicating an interest in discussion groups, with a maximum of 12 places available at each group. The location and timing of the focus groups were designed to maximise the opportunity for Panel members to take part. Groups were held in Forres, Elgin, Keith and Buckie at different times of the day.
- 1.6. This approach was successful in securing involvement from members across all community planning areas and a range of demographic groups; the profile of participants is presented below. However the number of groups held mean robust findings are not available at a sub area level.
- 1.7. A total of 30 Panel members attended the four focus groups; 7 in Buckie, 9 in Elgin, 8 in Forres and 6 in Keith. The table below summarises the profile of focus group participants.

### Profile of Focus Group Participants (N=30)

	Num
<b>GENDER</b>	
Male	13
Female	17
<b>AGE</b>	
Under 45	4
45-59	10
60+	15
Unknown	1
<b>GEOGRAPHIC AREA</b>	
Buckie	6
Elgin	7
Fochabers	1
Forres	9
Keith	4
Lossiemouth	2
Speyside	1

- 1.8. This report brings together views, experiences and preferences from all four focus groups. Although specific issues and suggestions varied to some extent across the four focus groups, robust area-specific findings are not available due to the numbers of focus groups held. Further consultation would be required to produce robust findings for sub-areas within Moray. However, some views expressed did relate to specific areas or types of areas (eg rural, urban) and we discuss this in the text of the report.

## **2. LOCAL POVERTY AND DEPRIVATION ISSUES**

- 2.1. First we look at focus group participants' views on the nature and extent of poverty and deprivation issues in their local area, and across Moray more widely.
- 2.2. It was not within the scope of the consultation to assess the prevalence of poverty across Moray, although respondents generally felt that poverty and deprivation are not widespread issues in Moray. Indeed relatively few reported (direct or indirect) experience of poverty related issues, and even had difficulty initially in identifying such issues.
- 2.3. Some felt that this was in part a reflection of the fact that poverty is often a "hidden" problem, and it was suggested that communities may not be aware of the extent to which local households may be experiencing significant deprivation. This informed many of the suggestions discussed in section 4 around how to tackle poverty and deprivation; many are focused on the need to make local services more easily accessible to those in need.
- 2.4. The main focus of the consultation was on identifying a range of specific poverty and deprivation issues having a potentially significant impact on local communities, and identifying potential ways in which the Fairer Scotland Fund could help to tackle these. In the remainder of this section we discuss the key issues identified, before looking at views on particular vulnerable groups in section 3 and potential uses for the Fund at section 4.
- 2.5. Below we discuss key issues identified under three broad themes; employment and skills/ qualifications; substance misuse; and the rural nature of Moray. However participants were clear in their views that these issues were not discreet problems, but rather there was significant overlap and connection between the issues discussed. This is important for suggestions discussed in section 4 on how the Fairer Scotland Fund can be used to tackle these issues - there was a clear view that a multi-strand approach was required to address a range of interconnected poverty issues.

### **Employment and skills/ qualifications**

- 2.6. Issues around employment, the economy and skills/ qualifications were perhaps seen as the most prevalent - and the most significant - poverty related problems for Moray. Specific issues around the limited range of employment opportunities, relatively low pay, and loss of skills and qualifications from the local workforce were seen as particular problems.
- 2.7. There was a common view that the volume of employment opportunities available in Moray was insufficient for local communities. This was clearly linked in part to the current economic downturn, and participants provided some anecdotal evidence on the impact of the recession on Moray in terms of loss of jobs and/or failure to attract employers to the area. This included specific mention of a perceived reluctance amongst local employers to support apprenticeships or vocational courses in the current economic climate.

- 2.8. Other recent pressures were also mentioned as having an impact in relation to the availability of job opportunities locally. Specifically it was suggested that an influx of migrant workers over the last 3-4 years had further restricted opportunities for local residents. This was seen as having an impact on the ability of residents to access less skilled positions which may be particularly important for households at risk of poverty or deprivation. However some also suggested migrant workers had been successful in securing more skilled positions, and this reflected the perceived poorer range of skills and qualifications within local communities (we discuss this further below).
- 2.9. Individuals also pointed to a longer term trend of decline in employment within industries that had traditionally played a significant role across Moray. Specific mention was made of the decline in the fishing industry having had a major impact in terms of poverty and deprivation within Moray's coastal towns, and the Buckie area in particular. Similarly there was a common perception that changes within other key industries such as agriculture, forestry and whisky production had also resulted in a reduction in employment opportunities (eg through greater mechanisation).
- 2.10. There was a clear perceived need to increase employment opportunities locally, and to promote Moray as a location for business. Some pointed to large employers who had been successful in the area, but there was wide scepticism about the extent to which new business could be attracted to Moray to offer new job opportunities. Some mention was made here of the need for Highland & Islands Enterprise and local agencies to work more closely in encouraging employers to locate to Moray.
- 2.11. However the rural nature and location of Moray was seen as a wider - and perhaps more fundamental - barrier to businesses moving to the area. Transport links were seen as a particular issue here. Locally, transport links were seen as poor and restricting the ability of businesses to draw on the labour pool across Moray - although this was in part due to the often significant distances potential employees may have to travel to work. Poor links to other parts of Scotland were also seen as a potential barrier, particularly with the Central Belt area.
- 2.12. The range and nature of employment opportunities was also seen as a significant contributing factor to poverty issues within Moray (in addition to the number of opportunities available locally).
- 2.13. Job opportunities were seen as being dominated by seasonal, part-time and casual work. This was felt to be in part a reflection of employment being quite heavily dependent on tourism in the area. However the relative lack of more secure full-time employment was seen as a significant issue for those trying to secure a wage to support a family, and also led to problems of financial and social instability for those able to secure only short term employment.
- 2.14. Also related to this issue was a perceived shortage of (better paid) opportunities for those with professional qualifications. This was felt to contribute to a loss of individuals with degree or similar qualifications from Moray, although it is difficult to isolate this from other social factors and the wider range of job opportunities available in more populous areas.

- 2.15. Perhaps the most significant issue relating to the nature of employment available in Moray, was low wage levels. There was a strong perception that wages were lower than other parts of Scotland - and in some cases significantly lower. This was felt to reflect the profile of employment locally (eg high levels of part-time and seasonal work), and was identified as a major contributing factor to poverty and deprivation in Moray.
- 2.16. Low wages were also seen as being linked to a loss of skilled workers from the area. Moreover it was noted that the problem may be more acute when there is a shortage of opportunities - eg during the current recession - as employers are able to fill positions at lower wages.

### **Substance misuse**

- 2.17. Alcohol and drug misuse were also identified by many participants as factors in poverty and deprivation issues across Moray.
- 2.18. There was broad agreement that both alcohol and drug misuse are significant problems for Moray, affecting all parts of the local community whether directly or indirectly. However views were less clear on the nature of the link between substance misuse and poverty/ deprivation; some highlighted substance misuse as a cause of poverty and deprivation, while others felt it was a result or "symptom" of poverty and deprivation. Nevertheless it is important to note that all felt substance misuse should be a priority for action in Moray.
- 2.19. However there was also disagreement on where action should be focused in the first instance. Some suggested that resources should focus on drug misuse as the most serious problem, while others felt that problems around alcohol misuse should be the priority.
- 2.20. Those preferring a focus on drug misuse suggested that this had a major role to play in a range of problems across Moray, with crime mentioned in particular. It was suggested that where drug misuse is a problem, it can be a factor in very significant problems for a community including serious crime and health issues. In this regard, a focus on tackling drug misuse was seen as having benefits in addressing the "root cause" of a range of other problems.
- 2.21. Others felt that alcohol misuse was a more important priority for action in Moray. A key issue here was a perception that alcohol misuse and excessive alcohol consumption is a very widespread problem for Moray - indeed it was suggested that this is a particular for issue for Moray and the wider region in comparison to other parts of Scotland. This view was expressed both in relation to levels of alcohol consumption, the extent of alcohol misuse specifically, and also in relation to underage drinking. This latter issue was mentioned as a specific problem for the health and lives of young people in Moray, but also as a contributing factor to alcohol misuse in the adult population.



- 2.22. Some felt that alcohol misuse posed quite different problems for Moray than drug misuse, which some felt was a relatively localised problem. It was suggested that in contrast to drug misuse, alcohol misuse is a widespread problem directly affecting a significant number of households but the effects of which in terms of poverty and deprivation may be less obvious. This latter point was seen as a particular problem for services, who can have difficulties in identifying and then accessing those requiring support.
- 2.23. A further issue arising specifically in relation to services tackling substance misuse problems was awareness of services. It became clear through discussion of potential ways of addressing some of the problems identified, that many participants were unaware of services currently available in Moray. It was suggested that this may reflect a wider lack of awareness around substance misuse related services, which may have a negative impact on the ability of these services to help people in the community.

### **Rural nature of Moray**

- 2.24. The rural nature of Moray was an issue that influenced much of the consultation discussion. This was highlighted as a key positive “pull” factor for those choosing to settle and/or remain in the area. However a number of factors relating to the rurality of Moray were noted as potential “push” factors, and as having a link to poverty and deprivation locally.
- 2.25. We have discussed earlier in this section perceived difficulties in attracting businesses to Moray, and the rural nature of Moray was seen as the main barrier here. This was both in relation to Moray’s location being distant from the Central belt with limited transport links, and also the dispersed population within Moray affecting the extent to which employers could make full use of the local labour force. The proximity of Aberdeen and to a lesser extent Inverness were also seen as an issue here, with the two cities being a more “obvious” choice for businesses looking to locate in the region.
- 2.26. The rural nature of Moray was also seen as a significant factor in the loss of skills and qualifications from the area, and particularly the loss of younger people. There was a perception that young people leaving school or college in Moray often move elsewhere to live and work, and also that those moving outwith Moray for higher education often choose not to return. Although it was suggested that this is not an uncommon trend for rural areas in Scotland, it was seen as having a significant impact on the quality of the labour force in the area. This pattern was also seen as reflecting broader deprivation issues around the limited range of job opportunities and lower wages available locally, and also social factors with younger people preferring the broader range of opportunities available in more urban areas.
- 2.27. Issues related to the dispersed population and poor transport links were also highlighted as a significant barrier to local households in terms of accessing employment, education, training and other services.

- 2.28. In relation to employment, education and training specifically it was suggested that the limited availability and high cost of public transport makes it very difficult for people to access opportunities if they do not have a car. This was felt to be a particular problem for more vulnerable households in lower paid positions - the levels of pay for these positions can mean that public transport is not a sustainable options, or working patterns can mean that services are not available at the times required. It was also noted that those in lower paid positions who do have access to a car can be particularly vulnerable to fuel price increases.
- 2.29. The impact of Moray's rurality for those trying to access employment, education or training was seen as the most significant issue in terms of poverty and deprivation. However the dispersed population and limited public transport links were also seen as being significant barriers to accessing services and amenities.
- 2.30. The issues here were similar to those highlighted in relation to employment and education. In particular the rural nature of Moray was seen as contributing to a lack of services and amenities available locally - particularly shopping and leisure activities - and also creating difficulties in terms of communities physically accessing available services.
- 2.31. Limited public transport services and reliance on car use in particular were seen as being particular difficulties for more vulnerable households in accessing health and social services, and other amenities such as shopping and leisure activities. Older people accessing health services were mentioned here, particularly difficulties for those living in more rural areas having to use public transport to access centralised health services.

#### **Other relevant issues**

- 2.32. The three broad themes discussed above account for the most significant poverty and deprivation issues raised by consultation participants. However a number of other issues were raised during the course of discussions that are relevant to suggested uses for the Fairer Scotland Fund discussed at section 4.
- 2.33. Some of these issues are around poverty and deprivation issues experienced by specific groups, and we discuss these in the next section. Below we list other more general issues mentioned by participants:
- Financial management skills and support to maximise households' benefits were mentioned as issues in a range of contexts. This included a lack of budgeting and money management in the school curriculum, and a reduction in the level of advice and support available to the wider public. This latter point was mentioned specifically in relation to the closure of Citizens' Advice Bureau services in Forres.
  - The affordability of housing was mentioned by some with direct experience of the difficulties in securing sufficient income locally to support the cost of home ownership in Moray. This was seen as being an issue for Moray, but respondents generally agreed that the affordability of housing was not more of a problem locally than elsewhere in Scotland.

### **3. ISSUES FOR PARTICULAR GROUPS**

- 3.1. In the previous section we discussed the range of poverty and deprivation issues raised by consultation participants. Throughout the discussion of these issues, specific mention was made of particular groups and we discuss these here.
- 3.2. In some instances these are groups felt to be particularly vulnerable to poverty and deprivation in general, or vulnerable to specific issues discussed in section 2. However groups were also mentioned in some cases as being relevant to the potential uses for the Fairer Scotland Fund detailed in section 4, for example where participants felt that resources should be targeted to particular parts of the community.

#### **Geography**

- 3.3. Consultation participants had limited views on the scale of poverty and deprivation issues across Moray, and as noted in the previous section some had difficulty in identifying specific issues in their local area.
- 3.4. However there were clearer views on where these poverty and deprivation were likely to be most significant. Indeed some suggested that geography may be the most important factor in terms of groups being vulnerable to poverty.
- 3.5. In terms of specific locations Buckie and Elgin - and to a lesser extent Lossiemouth - were seen as areas where poverty and deprivation issues were likely to be most significant. It is interesting to note that this is broadly in line with published statistics, with the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation identifying parts of Elgin and to a lesser extent Buckie as the most deprived areas within Moray.
- 3.6. Participants did not see significant differences in the nature of poverty and deprivation issues affecting these areas. However there was some view that substance misuse issues - seen as a significant problem across Moray as a whole - were most significant in the Buckie and Elgin areas.
- 3.7. The consultation also highlighted the wider issue of a decline in traditional industries having a negative impact in some areas. In particular the decline of fishing and related industries was identified as being a significant contributing factor to current poverty and deprivation issues in Buckie and many other coastal towns.

#### **Younger People**

- 3.8. The consultation also identified a range of demographic groups as having links to poverty and deprivation. The first of these is younger people, seen as being vulnerable to and in some cases one the causes of a range of poverty and deprivation issues:

- Younger people were seen as one of the groups affected by a lack of employment opportunities and low wage levels across Moray. Examples here included difficulties caused by low wage levels for young people looking to start a family or access the housing market. This was felt to contribute to a wider trend of younger people moving out of the area for work, although social factors were also seen as significant.
  - It was suggested that a reduction in apprenticeships and vocational opportunities has contributed to this problem, and moreover that there are currently insufficient positions locally for those completing education or training courses. Examples here included individuals having to leave Moray to find training and health service positions.
  - A lack of leisure and social opportunities was also seen as having an impact on younger people in Moray. There was a perceived lack of youth clubs and similar opportunities throughout Moray, and other local examples were given including a lack of football and other sports facilities in Forres.
- 3.9. Underage drinking was also highlighted as a specific issue for younger people in Moray. This was felt to be a problem across Moray, and a number of participants provided anecdotal evidence of underage drinking and related antisocial behaviour problems in their local area.
- 3.10. Participants raised a number of concerns in relation to underage drinking. The primary concern was in relation to the impact of higher alcohol consumption on the health and lives of younger people. The role played by underage drinking in antisocial behaviour and in some cases crime problems was also raised as a concern for the wider community. Some also felt that underage drinking was related to a (perceived) growing problems of excessive alcohol consumption and alcohol misuse in the wider population.

### **Families**

- 3.11. Families were less commonly identified as a specific group being vulnerable to poverty and deprivation. However a number of issues raised by the consultation have implications for families specifically, and suggest they may be a potential focus for future use of the Fairer Scotland Fund.
- Low wages and a shortage of full-time permanent positions were seen as a particular problem for those trying to support a family and/ or requiring larger housing. It was suggested that many families were “only just managing” and were particularly vulnerable to poverty and deprivation for example if they experienced an unexpected drop in their income. This was also seen as a particular problem for families relying on multiple part-time and seasonal positions.
  - A perceived lack of opportunities for young people and children is also likely to be a particular issue for families in Moray, although this was also mentioned as a potential factor in local antisocial behaviour problems affecting the wider community.

- Specific mention was made of a lack of support for families affected by substance misuse, health or domestic violence problems. In particular it was suggested that services did not currently do enough to prevent crisis points for families, for example by providing earlier support at the point problems first begin to appear (eg loss of employment). A lack of resourcing, and some unwillingness amongst families to engage with available services were both raised as issues here.

### Older People

3.12. Although older people were not mentioned in relation to some of the most significant overall poverty and deprivation issues - ie employment issues and substance misuse - they were felt to be vulnerable to poverty and deprivation. A range of potentially significant issues were raised, some of which were felt to be quite specific to older people:

- Access to local services and amenities was seen as perhaps the most widespread deprivation issue affecting older people in Moray. A lack of public transport was identified as a major issue here, and particularly for those in more rural areas where services can be very infrequent or non-existent. Difficulties encountered by “older older” people were mentioned here - this group was felt to be less likely to have access to a car, and may have difficulties using available public transport where it is not suitable for health or mobility needs.
- Older people were also felt to be significantly affected by a loss of services and amenities in local villages - examples given here included Post Offices and local grocers or newsagents. Participants highlighted the important role these services play as points of social contact for older people. It was also noted that older people can have difficulty travelling to access these services when they are moved or centralised to larger towns.
- Transport difficulties and a loss of local services were felt to contribute to issues of loneliness and social isolation for older people in Moray. This was felt to be potentially one of the most significant deprivation issue for some older people in Moray, and particularly for those living in more remote and rural areas.
- Also linked to issues of social isolation, participants suggested that older people can have significant difficulty with everyday tasks and minor maintenance or repair work around the home. This was felt to be a particular problem for those who do not have a local support network of family or friends, and who may not have the confidence to find a (reliable) local tradesperson.
- Some also felt that wider issues of the increasing cost of living and low incomes also affected older people, for example where pension funds are lower than expected. It was suggested that this left some older people struggling to meet their living costs and vulnerable to poverty and deprivation - for example if they have to try and meet unexpected repair or other costs. Vulnerability to rising fuel costs and fuel poverty in particular were seen as a significant issue for some.

#### **4. TACKLING PROBLEMS OF POVERTY AND DEPRIVATION**

- 4.1. In the previous two sections of the report we discussed the specific poverty and deprivation related issues identified through the consultation as being an appropriate focus for the Fairer Scotland Fund. These are wide ranging in nature, although most fell under a number of broad themes. Much of the consultation discussion was around poverty and deprivation issues that affect all parts of the community to some degree. However it is important to note that most issues were seen as having a greater impact on specific groups, while some were as being specific to individual groups.
- 4.2. A range of suggested uses for the Fairer Scotland Fund emerged from the discussion of poverty and deprivation issues. Suggestions were varied in terms of identifying issues where there was a lack of required services or support, where more could be done to promote or encourage access to existing provision, and areas where current services were insufficiently resourced.
- 4.3. Suggestions also cut across a range of themes, and we summarise them below under employment and skills/ qualifications, substance misuse and the rural nature of Moray. We also discuss a range of suggestions that relate to other issues and/or are targeted at specific groups within the community.
- 4.4. As is highlighted in section 2, consultation participants felt there was significant overlap and connection between the issues and themes discussed. Moreover there was a suggestion that this should be reflected in approaches taken to tackle identified issues, and specifically that the Fairer Scotland Fund should be used to support a multi-strand approach to address interconnected poverty and deprivation issues.

##### **Employment and skills/ qualifications**

- 4.5. It is interesting that, although this was seen as the most significant poverty and deprivation issue facing Moray, participants struggled to make specific suggestions on how the Fairer Scotland Fund could be used to address issues around employment and skills or qualifications.
- 4.6. This may be due in part to the fact that many specific issues raised - eg around a lack of job opportunities and low wage levels - were reflections of the broader profile of Moray and its economy. Participants noted that to address these issues more needed to be done in attracting employers to the area, and potentially in improving skills produced by the education system - neither being areas where the Fairer Scotland Fund is likely to have a role.
- 4.7. However a number of specific suggestions were identified, primarily around helping individuals disadvantaged by employment and/or skills related issues rather than necessarily tackling "root causes".

- There was a perceived need for more training opportunities in Moray, including apprenticeships. This was seen as having a potentially significant role in addressing the perceived shortage of skills in Moray, and also for example to help people who have lost their job recently (reference was made here to previous “training for work” schemes).
- There was some appreciation that funding training or apprenticeships may not be an appropriate use of the Fund. Here it was suggested that there may still be an important in improving awareness and promotion of available opportunities. There was a strong suggestion that often those most in need of training or other help accessing employment can be least aware of available opportunities - it was suggested that the Fund could support services focusing in this area.
- It was also suggested that there was a need for more practical and financial assistance for individuals struggling to access training or employment opportunities. In particular a need for help and/or financial support with transport and childcare costs were mentioned here. Examples included schemes to contribute towards transport costs for those who have to travel longer distances for training or employment. Single parents were also specifically mentioned as a specific focus for support in overcoming transport and childcare barriers to accessing training and employment.
- Participants also stressed that investment in this area should not be focused entirely on those not currently in training or employment. In particular there was a perceived need for training opportunities and other support specifically targeted to help those currently in lower paid and/or seasonal work who were seen as being particularly vulnerable.

### **Substance Misuse**

- 4.8. Substance misuse emerged as a significant issue throughout discussion groups, in relation to both alcohol and drug misuse.
- 4.9. Indeed these were seen as quite distinct issues. Excessive alcohol consumption and alcohol misuse was seen as having a widespread impact on poverty and deprivation issues, but that these impacts are not always obvious; drug misuse was felt to be much less widespread, but has a significant impact where it is a problem.
- 4.10. Despite perceived differences in the nature and impact of drug and alcohol misuse, it is notable that most suggestions here applied equally to people affected by drug or alcohol.
- Raising awareness of available services and support was seen as a high priority here. There was a perceived need for better and more accessible information across the Moray area, although it is notable that drug misuse and to a lesser extent alcohol issues were seen as being particularly significant in the Elgin and Buckie areas.

- In addition to raising awareness of available services, there was a perceived need to change the ways in which individuals engage with services to make them more accessible. In particular, participants suggested that more “informal” services or points of liaison between individuals and services would be helpful. For example it was proposed that identified individuals within local communities could act as a first point of contact for people affected by drug and/or alcohol misuse - these should be contacts where members of the local community can talk in confidence, receive information and advice, and be linked in to specific services as required.
- There was also a clear perceived need to provide greater resources to existing services to support people affected by drug and alcohol misuse problems. Existing services were seen as being unable to meet current needs, and in particular would struggle to handle any increase in demand for example due to improved awareness and/or easier access to services.
- A community liaison position was also suggested as providing a potential benefit in tackling drug and alcohol awareness and misuse by young people. A specific suggestion was made here that independent workers could liaise with schools - or potentially have a base in schools - to provide advice and assistance to children.
- This also links to a perceived need to address underage drinking in Moray. Suggestions here included improving publicity on the dangers of underage drinking, and more pro-active work to prevent the selling of alcohol to under-age people.

### **Rural Nature of Moray**

- 4.11. The third key area emerging through the consultation was the impact of Moray’s rurality in terms of poverty and deprivation.
- 4.12. This was focused primarily on transport-related issues, but also related to social isolation and access to local services and amenities. As such the issue cut across much discussion on other specific themes. Specific suggestions here were:
  - Providing help and financial support to those for whom travel is a barrier to accessing employment, training or education. Examples included transport schemes similar to the current “dial-a-bus” linked to education or training opportunities, and those trying to find work. Single parents were mentioned as a potential target group, although issues were felt to affect many residents in the more rural and remote areas of Moray. It is also important to note that participants highlighted a need to help those seeking employment, and those currently in work looking to improve their prospects.



- It was also suggested that the Fairer Scotland Fund could be used to extend the current “dial-a-bus” service for older people. This was seen as providing a valuable service in helping people access health services and other amenities. It was suggested that additional resourcing was required to extend the geographical coverage of the scheme.
- Some also felt that there may be value in extending the “dial-a-bus” scheme to help other demographic groups. This was suggested specifically in relation to employment and education/ training, but there was some support for a service that facilitated access to other services and amenities. A focus on younger parents and families with limited access to private or public transport was suggested.

### **Other suggestions**

- 4.13. A range of other specific suggestions emerged from discussion of poverty and deprivation issues in Moray, and that did not fall within the overarching themes discussed in this section. We summarise these suggestions below.
- Local community liaisons or “community champions” were suggested, similar to the role mentioned specifically in relation to drug and alcohol misuse services. However there was also a perceived need for a similar role to make other services more accessible to the local community. For example a role as a contact for individuals reporting antisocial behaviour or crime was mentioned, as was encouraging engagement with social work services including child protection.
  - Initiatives to improve awareness of tourism opportunities available within Moray were also mentioned. This reflected a common view that tourism had a potentially significant role in supporting Moray’s economy out of the current recession, and attracting new business to the area.
  - There was a perceived need for a handyman or tradesperson service for older people specifically - whether extending existing services or supporting new services. Difficulties in undertaking minor maintenance work around the home was highlighted as a significant problem for older people, and particularly those with a limited network of family and friends locally. A specific suggestion was made that retired tradespeople could be approached to play a role in services to help with minor maintenance and repair tasks. This was seen as offering significant benefits in terms of providing older people with reliable and affordable assistance, and potentially giving opportunities to retired tradespeople interested in a lower level of work.
  - Participants suggested a quite wide ranging need for more community groups and services. Specifically there was a perceived lack of activities available for younger people and older people, both within towns and more rural areas.

- It was also suggested that the Fund could have a role in supporting schemes focused on sustainable energy production for use by public services. Examples included provision of “community windmills” to power local schools and public buildings, and using waste water from distilleries to heat public buildings. It was suggested that these initiatives could produce cost savings that can be passed on to local residents (eg through Council Tax reductions, or more focused financial assistance).
- 4.14. Over and above the specific suggestions detailed in this section, participants also had clear views on how the Fairer Scotland Fund should be administered. Specifically it was suggested that more could be done to raise awareness of the Fund, for example within local voluntary groups and services.
- 4.15. There were also suggestions that the Fund should be more open to direct approaches and proposals from members of the public. The current consultation work was praised in this regard, but there was also a feeling that the Fund could be used to encourage local entrepreneurialism and social enterprise.

\* \_ \* \_ \*