What works to prevent and tackle poverty stigma?
A rapid evidence review

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February 2026

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Summary

» To inform policy and practice approaches to tackling poverty stigma in Wales, WCPP commissioned The Poverty Alliance and the Scottish Poverty Inequality Research Unit to deliver a rapid evidence review on how poverty stigma has been effectively prevented or addressed in policy and practice, in the UK and internationally.

» The review focuses on a single research question: 'What works to prevent and tackle poverty stigma through public policy and practice?'. Twenty-three papers are included in this review covering a range of policy areas including housing, food assistance, social security and education.

» The evidence in this review includes a small number of interventions that have been evaluated, very few of which could be described as robust evaluations. The review mainly draws on evidence and learning from research on a range of approaches that have not been evaluated.

» Three modes of effective practice were identified, with multiple examples of how each can be achieved:

  • General operational practices (e.g. automation of benefits, cash-first approaches, universalising provision, minimising the 'burden' of proof of entitlement)

  • Overarching cultures and values (e.g. engaging people with lived experience of poverty to ensure that services are mindful of how their offer is received; principles underpinning the Cost of the School Day such as dignity, empathy and respect) and

  • Challenging stigma directly (e.g. promoting alternative, non-stigmatising interpretations and descriptions).

» The principal lessons for non-stigmatising service provision can be drawn from the everyday procedures of effective services. Provision should be designed with the user in mind, responsive to demand, and based on an assumption of entitlement, removing the need to assess or 'prove' eligibility for support.

» The review makes several recommendations for building the evidence base on what works to prevent and tackle poverty stigma, including identifying and sharing learning from local examples of practice and including poverty stigma as a measurement outcome in evaluations of wider interventions and services for people on low incomes.

Introduction

In 2024, a nationally representative survey found that poverty stigma affects one in four adults in Wales (24%), with even higher rates among people on low incomes, disabled people, young people and renters (Inglis et al., 2024a). Experiences of feeling stigmatised evoke feelings of shame and other negative emotions, such as fear and sadness (Tyler, 2020). Research has shown that poverty stigma is associated with a range of negative impacts on mental health and wellbeing and can prevent people from accessing the support to which they are entitled from public services (Inglis et al., 2023; Scottish Parliament Cross-party Group (CPG) on Poverty, 2023).

The stigma that pervades poverty is a problem in its own right, as it undermines strategies that aim to reduce poverty and mitigate the adverse consequences associated with it. This is recognised by the Welsh Government, which has a specific objective to tackle poverty stigma as part of its Child Poverty Strategy (Welsh Government, 2024). It is within this context that this rapid evidence review on approaches to preventing and tackling stigma was commissioned by the Wales Centre for Public Policy in 2024.

This report synthesises research evidence on tackling and reducing poverty stigma, drawing on UK-based and international literature published since 2010. It begins by setting out the review aims and the definitions of poverty stigma that underpin the review, and briefly describes the methodology, which is discussed in greater detail in Annex 1. Key findings are then presented.

This rapid evidence review was conducted by The Poverty Alliance (based in Scotland) and the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit (SPIRU) at Glasgow Caledonian University, two organisations widely recognised for their work on poverty and, in particular, on challenging poverty stigma.

Review aims and process

The primary aim of this rapid evidence review is to contribute to efforts in Wales to tackle poverty by improving understanding of the outcomes of policy and practice approaches that seek to address poverty stigma. The review focuses on a single research question: **'What works to prevent and tackle poverty stigma through public policy and practice?'**

Terminology

There is no universally accepted definition of poverty stigma used consistently across the literature or in policy and practice. In this review, we draw on Inglis et al.'s (2019, p. 2) conceptualisation of poverty stigma as '… the collective forms of stigma that are experienced by people living on low incomes'. Inglis et al. (2024b, p. 1) identify four types of poverty stigma:

Received stigma: a form of discrimination directed towards a person because they have a low income. Examples of received stigma include being disrespected or judged unfairly by others.

Anticipated stigma: an individual's concern that others will treat them unfairly because they have a low income.

Self-stigma: occurs when people on low incomes internalise negative stereotypes and apply these to themselves. This form of stigma also contains an affective component and may be experienced as feelings of shame.

Perceived structural stigma: relates to individuals' beliefs about how people on low incomes are treated by institutions, public services or policy makers.

Review methodology

Here we summarise our approach to the review. A comprehensive and detailed account is provided in Annex 1. The work was completed between September 2024 and March 2025.

Our brief was to deliver a rapid evidence review. Although this requires accepting limits to the scope and range of the evidence identified and analysed, we adopted a systematic approach which is transparent, approximates the approach of a systematic review, and does not compromise on standards. Our goal was to identify 'what works, for whom, under what conditions'.

Our approach was underpinned by initial engagement with subject experts and experts by experience to inform the development of the review protocol, alongside a preliminary review of the evidence base. This confirmed that there was an extensive literature that made reference to 'poverty' and 'stigma', and highlighted the need for tightly specified search parameters to deliver an effective review.

The review progressed through three stages. First, we conducted an initial scoping of the formal academic and informal grey literature to gain an understanding of the breadth of the evidence base on poverty stigma, and to enable decisions to be taken on the substantive fields to be examined in the evidence review proper. Second, we conducted a multi-stage screening of this literature to identify candidate articles. This screening progressed through five stages and resulted in the identification of 11 papers, from an initial list of 3,248 hits across our searches, which were peer reviewed, had poverty stigma as a main focus, and addressed tackling poverty stigma through policy and or practice. We also identified eight papers from the grey literature that were considered worthy of inclusion. At a later stage, four additional articles were incorporated at the request of WCPP (Carrick et al., 2017; Murray et al., 2022; Lasky-Fink et al., 2023; The Poverty Alliance, 2024).

To ensure a systematic approach to appraisal, we adopted the Mixed Method Appraisal Tool (MMAT) to assess the quality of articles and reports with qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods designs. Articles were rated against five criteria and scored from 0 to 5, with 5 indicating that all quality criteria were met.

Reflections on the literature and evidence base

The body of knowledge accumulated enabled us to address the research question. However, as with all rapid evidence reviews, there are limitations, and several observations can be made about the wider evidence base:

1. There are few evaluations of interventions that aim explicitly to tackle poverty stigma.

2. There is an extensive literature that considers stigma and poverty, but a much more limited body of literature that focuses specifically on poverty stigma. Within this literature, greater attention is paid to causes and consequences than to solutions.

3. Much of the literature that explores how poverty stigma is challenged focuses on how individuals negotiate and resist the stigma they encounter. In the context of this review's research question, this provides limited learning for policy and practice.

4. Many of the papers reviewed did not focus solely on tackling poverty stigma, but also sought to address the root causes of poverty. This makes it difficult to disentangle the specific impact of approaches aimed at tackling poverty stigma, as positive outcomes (reducing poverty stigma) may have been an unintended positive consequence of the actions taken to tackle poverty more broadly.

5. The evidence does not differentiate clearly between different forms of poverty stigma, such as those four modes proposed by Inglis et al. (2024b) as identified above. In our appraisal of the poverty stigma that was addressed, we found no examples that gathered information about, or addressed, self-stigma or perceived structural stigma.

6. Our brief led us to concentrate on papers where poverty stigma was the main focus. This may have resulted in the exclusion of relevant examples where tackling poverty stigma was a secondary (or subsidiary) focus. Similarly, the emphasis on service provision meant that we did not review how poverty stigma is tackled for specific populations experiencing poverty.

7. Finally, there is a clear need to strengthen evaluation of impact. Many articles consist primarily of critical reflections on the immediacy of interventions. However, assessing impact on stigma is complex, dependent on factors beyond individual interventions, and requires longer-term timeframes to understand enduring effects.

Review findings

This section of the report synthesises findings from the literature on approaches and interventions that seek to prevent or tackle poverty stigma. The literature search identified five evaluations of interventions or programmes that explicitly aimed to tackle poverty stigma, alongside a wider range of empirical and non-empirical papers that provided useful learning and recommendations for policy and practice.

Three of the evaluated interventions were based in education with school-aged children: two poverty-proofing approaches in UK schools (Mazzoli-Smith and Todd, 2016; Laing et al., 2023; Beeson et al., 2024), and one free meals programme in high-poverty schools (defined as schools with a high proportion of children from low-income households) in the United States (Domina et al., 2024). The remaining evaluations included a poverty simulation intervention involving healthcare professionals (Murray et al., 2022) and an intervention aimed at reducing the stigma associated with rental assistance in the United States (Lasky-Fink and Linos, 2023).

Most of the evidence reviewed was drawn from empirical research, but also included an inquiry (Scottish Parliament Cross-party Group (CPG) on Poverty, 2023), a report produced by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation-funded Stigma Free Futures Design team (Tyler and Campbell, 2024), evidence collated through workshops (Wales Centre for Public Policy, 2024), and policy and practice briefings (Child Poverty Action Group, 2023).

The evidence is presented thematically, covering service design, poverty-proofing in schools, housing and regeneration, training, social security and food provision.

Annex 2 provides a table of all the papers included in the review, including details of specific population groups and policy themes addressed.

Design of services

Factors to underpin service provision

A recent inquiry in Scotland on poverty stigma received responses from twenty organisations, several of which highlighted the need to include people with lived experience in the design, evaluation and delivery of public services. Responses also recommended that the design and funding of services should be focused on the user, to meet people's needs while affording them dignity and respect (Scottish Parliament CPG on Poverty, 2023). The report contended that local, Scottish and UK governments should tackle poverty stigma through service design, by providing poverty awareness training to staff in public-facing roles, and by investing in services for people on low incomes.

Automation of services and cash-first approaches

Positive examples of public services that effectively challenged poverty stigma included local authorities that automated services during the Covid-19 pandemic, and services embedding cash-based support (Scottish Parliament CPG on Poverty, 2023). The report states:

'A cash first approach avoids stigma, empowers people to make the best choices for their households and families, and shows commitment to including the voice of low-income families in policy decisions designed to tackle poverty.'

(Scottish Parliament CPG on Poverty, 2023: p.37).

One example of effective automation identified in evidence submitted by the Child Poverty Action Group to the aforementioned inquiry in Scotland was Glasgow City Council automating School Clothing Grant processes in 2017. This removed the need to apply separately for the grant where entitlement was already evident through a successful application for free school meals. The Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland also referred to the positive impacts on parents of automating free school meals during the Covid-19 pandemic, which brought parents 'considerable relief' by removing the need to complete forms. Here, the 'relief' refers not to a reduction in administrative burden, but to the de-stigmatising effect of reducing the number of times parents are required to confront their status as claimants who need assistance to meet their children's needs.

A rapid review of stigma relating to the use of foodbanks and affordable food provision in Birmingham (UK) recommended action to mitigate stigma (Birmingham City Council, no date). The overarching recommendation focused on preventing the need for foodbanks through cash-first approaches, such as providing adequate benefits and ensuring that more workers are paid a Living Wage. These measures would provide sufficient income to enable citizens to exercise choice when sourcing food. Cash-first approaches to addressing food poverty were first promoted in Scotland through the Menu for Change project, which advocated actions prioritising financial gain, including income maximisation support through cash payments (Independent Food Aid Network, no date).

Co-location of services

One research study included in this review explored the stigma-reducing impact of the co-location of advice workers and services in three GP medical practices in Scotland (Carrick et al., 2017). While Carrick et al.'s study does not explicitly reference poverty stigma, the focus on reducing stigma associated with claiming benefits is relevant to this review. The study involved a small sample of patients (n = 35), most of whom reported that access to advice workers reduced feelings of stigma and increased feelings of self-worth. Several design features were identified as contributing to reduced poverty stigma, including referrals made through GPs and other medical practice staff with whom patients already had trusted relationships, and support delivered by advisers who were non-judgemental about their circumstances.

Poverty proofing in schools

Both the Poverty Proofing the School Day programme in the North East of England (Children North East), and the UK-wide Cost of the School Day (CoSD) programme delivered by the Child Poverty Action Group, in partnership with Children North East, seek to tackle poverty stigma in schools. Evaluations have examined a range of school-related outcomes, one of which is poverty stigma.

Case study: Cost of the School Day (by CPAG) and Poverty Proofing the School Day (by Children North East)

Both programmes aim to remove barriers to learning resulting from living in poverty. The methodology in each programme involves a school audit that collates information from children and young people, staff, and parents or carers about school costs and experiences of poverty stigma. Changes are then implemented to reduce costs and tackle stigma in participating schools. Key factors underpinning the success of the programmes include strong support from school senior leadership teams and the allocation of responsibility for identifying and implementing actions to a named member of staff (Laing et al., 2023).

Schools have introduced a range of approaches to remove stigmatising practices, including:

- Universal approaches to provision, such as making breakfast available to all pupils in all classes, ensuring that pupils who have not eaten before school are not singled out.

- Actions relating to school uniforms, including making emergency uniforms available, recycling pre-loved clothing, and reducing costs. These measures reduce the risk of pupils being excluded or singled out due to affordability.

- Changes in communication and language, such as avoiding discussions of costs or debts with pupils and not sending debt letters home with children.

The evaluation of the Children North East Poverty Proofing programme concluded that the 'greatest single benefit of going through the process' for schools was 'the opportunity to reflect on the fact that children living in poverty were being stigmatised multiple times during the school day' (Mazzoli-Smith and Todd, 2016, p. 8). Additional benefits of CoSD work included evidence of improved attendance and attainment, increased take-up of free school meals, a less costly school day, and higher participation by disadvantaged pupils in school trips and music tuition (Mazzoli-Smith and Todd, 2016). However, not all schools have engaged with the programme, and not all that do sustain a CoSD approach. It is also important to recognise that while the programme provides schools with practical actions to reduce stigma, many root causes of stigma lie beyond the school environment.

Although the evaluation of earlier work was restricted due to Covid-19, a final evaluation of the CoSD programme identified positive impacts on pupils, families and schools. These included improvements in the wellbeing of children and families, reductions in the costs of schooling, and the strengthening of school institutions through new structures and processes (Laing et al., 2023).

Both programme evaluations provide evidence of effective measures to tackle poverty stigma. Parents and carers reported that their CoSD projects resulted in destigmatising practices, including the introduction of prepayment plans, earlier notification of school trips, changes to uniforms to make them cheaper and more accessible, and reductions in the number and cost of dressing up or dressing down days to reduce the financial burden on parents/carers (Laing et al., 2023).

Housing and local regeneration

In contrast to the work on service design and the Cost of the School Day, which reported only positive impacts, interventions to tackle place-based stigma through housing and area regeneration report mixed evidence of impact. Three studies that examined efforts to address housing and neighbourhood stigma were appraised, namely Carnegie et al. (2018) on public housing in Dublin, Ireland; Ejiogu and Denedo (2021) on social housing and stigma in England; and Hohle (2023) on civic engagement in Buffalo (Cleveland, Ohio, USA).

Ejiogu and Denedo (2021), in their review of social housing and stigma in England, argue that relatively little is known about how social housing stigma is constructed and experienced, or about how stigma is challenged in social housing. Their review of the literature, alongside qualitative research with stakeholders in England, focuses on how social housing stigma has been addressed through the planning system, staff training in housing associations and local councils, and by giving residents a voice in policy development and service delivery. However, they conclude that these measures have had limited success in reducing poverty stigma. They also argue that policies aimed at creating mixed-tenure neighbourhoods and regeneration projects have been unsuccessful because they address the symptoms of stigma rather than the power relationships at the heart of stigmatising processes, particularly those between social housing landlords and tenants.

Ejiogu and Denedo (2021) advocate deliberative and collective efforts involving multiple stakeholders to challenge stigma in social housing, and set out key recommendations for policymakers, politicians, the social housing sector and the media. Recommendations for the social housing sector include strengthening tenant voice at national, regional and local levels, and redesigning regulatory and governance arrangements to improve accountability to tenants. For government, the overarching recommendation is to adopt a rights-based approach to housing which 'views access to affordable housing as a fundamental human right' (Ejiogu and Denedo, 2021, p. 8).

An examination of the effectiveness of tenure and income mixing to de-stigmatise three neighbourhoods in Dublin that previously comprised public housing reported mixed effects (Carnegie et al., 2018). The rationale for these schemes is that familiarity can facilitate understanding and that, consistent with the arguments set out in *The Spirit Level* (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010), reduced polarisation leads to better outcomes for all. However, the study found that impacts on internal stigmatisation, referring to perceptions of stigma within communities, and external stigmatisation, referring to the public image of neighbourhoods, varied depending on the degree to which tenure and income mixing had been achieved (Carnegie et al., 2018). Carnegie et al. (2018) note that income mixing, or poverty deconcentration, is the most commonly used mechanism in the Republic of Ireland to address stigma in public rented neighbourhoods.

Residents in one site where tenure and income mixing had been achieved identified positive impacts on the external image of the neighbourhood. However, the study also found that in this same neighbourhood, tenure mixing may have exacerbated internal stigmatisation due to 'significant conflict between private and public residents' (Carnegie et al., 2018, p. 16). The paper concludes by emphasising the importance of accounting for socio-economic context and housing market conditions when designing tenure-mixing programmes to address stigma in public housing. Evidence from the study suggested, for example, that tenure mixing was difficult to achieve in highly stigmatised neighbourhoods where properties were hard to sell.

Hohle (2023) examined grassroots civic engagement and collective action during an annual garden tour in Buffalo (Cleveland, Ohio, USA), assessing whether this activity influenced place reputation and challenged pre-existing stigma. The event is a large, free, self-guided garden tour that attracts thousands of visitors. Hohle (2023) notes that by addressing the 'stigma of abandonment', for example through removing absentee landlords and attracting prospective homeowners who cared for their properties and surroundings, 'garden tours sent new Buffalo reputational signals to counter the old Buffalo stigma' (p. 204). However, Hohle (2023, p. 200) also concludes that collective 'reputational reframing' efforts, defined as the 'discourses, narratives and social activities geared towards changing the city's reputation in relation to existing stigma', were centred on elite cultural organisations and amenities, and led to reframing of the city's reputation. He states: 'The reputational making activities impacted both insiders and outsiders. It created a cultural framework for insiders to see themselves and their city differently from the stigma' (Hohle, 2023, p. 214). As such, although place-based interventions can challenge negative city images, these interventions do not always take place in the most deprived areas or encourage a rethinking of the lived experiences of the most impoverished citizens. Instead, they often focus on demonstrating that elite cultural activities can flourish in stigmatised cities.

There is also an additional body of literature on territorial stigma that explores how to change the fortunes of stigmatised neighbourhoods, such as the work reviewed by Holmes (2022). While this literature may lead to outcomes similar to those identified by Hohle (2023), unlike Hohle's study it does not typically frame the tackling of stigma as an explicit objective.

Training and awareness

Two older papers were identified that focused on training with social workers and the reduction of poverty stigma (Gupta, 2015; Beddoe and Keddell, 2016). Although neither paper draws on original empirical evidence, Beddoe and Keddell (2016) draw on studies that have employed teaching methods in social work education to highlight the potential for educating students about poverty stigma.

Beddoe and Keddell (2016) explore the use of complex and realistic case studies, bringing 'service user' voices into the classroom, and using creative approaches. The premise of this work is the expectation that trainee clinicians may have limited understanding of the challenges of living in poverty, which could lead to stigma-inducing practice and ineffective interventions. Poverty simulation exercises may help practitioners and clinicians to develop empathy and knowledge about the ways in which poverty impacts health and wellbeing. Beddoe and Keddell (2016) refer to other literature that has explored how 'service user' voices can be incorporated into teaching as an experiential method of bringing the realities of poverty stigma into social work education. However, no evidence is provided on the impacts of these interventions.

Gupta (2015), in her descriptive paper on a workshop focused on poverty and shame, brought together academics, practitioners and family members living in poverty with experience of child protective services. The aim was to inform the development of a training programme for social workers. During the workshop, parents shared both negative and positive experiences of child protection services in relation to poverty and shame. Positive experiences included social workers spending time with parents to get to know them better and not treating them as a 'tick box' exercise, in ways that contradicted expectations of being judged and blamed for their circumstances. This included small details, such as social workers accepting that children's bedrooms were sometimes messy without interpreting this as a sign of poor parenting. Gupta (2015) concludes that attention must be paid to how professional power in social work practice is exercised, and to ensuring it promotes, rather than diminishes, human dignity and family members' capabilities.

Following a recommendation from WCPP, we also appraised a paper that explored the longer-term impact of a poverty simulation role play exercise, described by the authors as a form of 'cultural competency training', on healthcare practitioners' attitudes towards poverty (Murray et al., 2022). Conducted in the USA, attrition limits the conclusions that can be drawn about long-term effects. However, using the Attitudes Towards Poverty Scale, results showed sustained improvements in stigma scores over a six-month period following the intervention. Qualitative data collected immediately after the simulation, and again one month later, indicated that participants felt the exercise increased their awareness, compassion and empathy, and reduced negative judgements towards low-income patients (Murray et al., 2022). The authors concluded that ongoing education is required to sustain longer-term improvements in attitudes.

Social security

Two papers provide evidence on tackling poverty stigma and improving benefit uptake (Lasky-Fink and Linos, 2023; The Poverty Alliance, 2024).

In the USA, Lasky-Fink and Linos (2023) explored the role of reducing stigma in shaping demand for rental assistance. They found that 'subtle framing changes' aimed at de-stigmatising rental assistance increased engagement by 36% and increased application requests by around 18%, compared with a control group. These changes included language designed to address potential sources of both anticipated stigma (by highlighting that the programme was intended to help all eligible residents access the support they deserved) and internalised stigma (by emphasising that it was no one's fault if they were struggling to pay their rent). Notably, in this study, stigma is tackled as a means to improve benefit uptake, rather than being addressed because it is viewed as a problem in and of itself (that is, tackling stigma as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself).

Similarly, in Scotland, The Poverty Alliance's (2024) citizens' panel research on the impacts of poverty stigma on benefit take-up involved deliberation sessions to develop and prioritise recommendations for steps the Scottish Government could take to reduce stigma and improve benefit take-up. To overcome stigma and increase benefit take-up, people with experience of receiving benefits in Scotland called for:

- A sufficiently resourced right to advocacy.

- Training on poverty and inequality stigma to build the capacity of frontline staff and policy makers.

- Streamlining of processes for accessing entitlements through increased automation and 'passporting' of benefits, such as bus pass entitlements.

- A public awareness campaign to challenge negative stereotypes and raise understanding of social security as a public good.

- Locally available information and support delivered through trusted relationships, with community mental health teams, social work, and other health or care providers identified as valuable access points.

- Changes in language around social security, building on steps already taken by the Scottish Government and Social Security Scotland.

- Clear, targeted information on benefit entitlements for people experiencing domestic abuse, including rights-affirming and anti-stigma messages such as 'You don't need to feel ashamed for asking for your entitlements'.

Food

Three papers were identified through the review which provided evidence on free school meal programmes that aimed to tackle poverty stigma (CPAG, 2023; Birmingham City Council, no date; Domina et al., 2024). We are aware of an extensive literature (e.g. the work of Kayleigh Garthwaite) around food assistance which demonstrates how the organisational practices of state or charitable food provision (time limited support, rationing, vouchers, third-party assessment) can produce stigma. Much of this literature, however, does not emphasise tackling stigma as an explicit goal of this work. In addition, WCPP identified two papers that were not captured through our systematic search, which focused explicitly on tackling poverty stigma through food aid (Brennan-Tovey et al., 2023; Ranta et al., 2024), both of which are summarised below.

A briefing published by the Child Poverty Action Group proposes solutions to reduce free school meal stigma, based on research with schools and families in London, although details of the methodology and sample for the study are not provided. CPAG (2023, p.1) highlight that many of the recommendations are 'small changes that can make a big difference to how young people experience school food'. Solutions to reduce free school meal stigma include greater flexibility and choice, such as allowing free school meal funds to be used at any time during the school day, allowing pupils to roll over free school meal funds if they miss lunch, enabling all pupils to collect free packed lunches discreetly, and ensuring food choices are organised and priced so that the full range of meal options is accessible.

In the USA, Domina et al.'s (2024) evaluation of a programme offering free school meals to all pupils in a sample of schools with a high proportion of children living in poverty examined effects on levels of student suspensions. In doing so, Domina et al. (2024) conceived of the programme as an intervention 'that alleviates a source of socioeconomic stigma'. Although promising as a study that sought to tackle poverty stigma, the focus of the evaluation meant that it did not measure or explicitly explore whether poverty stigma itself was reduced. The authors also stated that their analysis could not conclusively separate stigma and nutrition as mechanisms for the programme's effects.

Two further papers focused on tackling poverty stigma through food provision, one through local food hubs (Psarikidou et al., 2019) and the other through the use of affordable food banks (Birmingham City Council, no date). As previously noted, a review of evidence on affordable food banks recommends cash-based approaches to food insecurity. Similarly, Psarikidou et al. (2019) highlight the limitations of local food hubs in overcoming poverty stigma. They argue that the food hubs in their study appeared to 'appropriate and reproduce existing narratives of stigmatisation, or even enable new processes of stigmatisation through discourses and practices', primarily by employing individual-based stigma management strategies. Examples of enabling new processes of stigmatisation included 'implicitly appropriating or even reproducing the stereotypes of knowledge deficits attributed to recipients of food aid', through a focus on enhancing people's cooking and ICT skills. Some evidence is provided on how food banks and affordable food models can mitigate shame and stigma by offering welcoming and positive physical and social environments (Birmingham City Council, no date). For example, a review by Birmingham City Council highlights evidence on the importance of the friendliness of volunteers and the destigmatisation of the use of food banks and other models of food assistance (citing Bowe et al., 2019).

We also acknowledge the work of WCPP, which has presented evidence on the potential of universal free school meals to alleviate stigma and improve take-up (James, 2024), and evidence in the WCPP policy briefing on food assistance and poverty stigma (Morgan et al., 2024). James (2024) argues that universal provision reduces stigma as it is no longer associated with passported welfare, and speculates that this may lead to a more inclusive learning environment. Within their wider introduction to, and review of, poverty stigma, Morgan et al. (2024) reflect on the ways in which food provision can generate poverty stigma. In this policy briefing, it is also argued that poverty stigma can be tackled through involving people with lived experience, redesigning social security, challenging damaging narratives and discourse, changing stigmatising language used in support programmes, and cultural competence training.

Brennan-Tovey et al. (2023) conducted a small-scale ethnographic case study to explore user experiences of 'stigma-power' (Tyler, 2020) and 'anti-stigma strategies' at an independent food hub in north east England. The case study found that users deployed strategies to avoid stigma, while the hub implemented a range of approaches to reduce user stigma. Drawing a distinction between self-stigma (self-stigmatisation) and public stigma (prejudice and discrimination), the study aimed to explore how stigma-power is utilised, the impact it has on users, and how it is challenged. Self-stigmatisation was reportedly managed by users limiting their use of food aid, only accessing services when a trusted volunteer was working, using positive self-talk to reaffirm their legitimacy as users, and making efforts to 'ignore the stigma'. The hub acknowledged stigma as a problem and sought to reduce this by making the facility look less like a food bank, fostering a sense that the service was provided for the community by the community, ensuring volunteers were empathetic and sensitive to users' experiences, and presenting the service in a way that emphasised its environmental credentials, for example by preventing food waste going to landfill. Although promising, the case study concludes with a call for further research to assess the effectiveness of these low-cost strategies in challenging poverty stigma.

Ranta et al. (2024) examined social supermarkets, presented as another alternative to food banks. They adopted a multi-method approach to explore user perspectives in a small-scale study focused on two social supermarkets in East Sussex, South England. As with Brennan-Tovey et al. (2023), the way in which services were delivered, including a friendly atmosphere, opportunities for social interaction, and support provided beyond access to food, was credited with helping to reduce stigma and promote dignity. Providers were similarly described as 'making concerted efforts to reduce stigma' through offering choice, lowering barriers to access, and creating social spaces. Even so, the study concludes that feelings of embarrassment associated with using social supermarkets were not eliminated for users.

Wider learning

Four sources were identified which provided more general learning for policy and practice on tackling poverty stigma, and which did not align to a specific theme. Two research papers on experiences of poverty stigma conclude on the importance of assuring dignity in anti-poverty policies (Walker et al., 2013; Chen et al., 2020). Walker's international and comparative article draws conclusions on tackling poverty stigma, stating that whilst 'dignity' may not be the perfect antonym for the shame induced by poverty, anti-poverty policies that 'dignify' should help to build self-esteem (Walker et al., 2013). Chen et al.'s (2020) study on poverty-related shame among older people on low incomes in urban areas in China concludes with recommendations for creating 'strength-orientated interventions', making the case for social policies that foster the capacities of older people. The authors also argue that anti-poverty measures should pay greater attention to promoting social solidarity and social participation among people living in poverty.

Place, health and poverty stigma in a post-industrial community were explored in research with young people in Merthyr, Wales (Thomas, 2016). The paper argues that governmental cuts to the area 'will further discredit and stigmatise those already feeling the effects of poverty and inequality' (Thomas, 2016, p.7). Thomas identifies three key recommendations relevant to tackling poverty stigma. First, place-based stigma can only be reduced by addressing material conditions and improving people's lives as well as their opportunities for maintaining 'healthy living'. Second, place-based stigma should be challenged through contesting popular discourses about stigmatised places that are promoted through media outlets. Third, it is asserted that by working collaboratively in communities, young people 'can be provided with the necessary resources to help articulate concerns to public officials' (Thomas, 2016, p.7), which may have the unintended positive effect of challenging stigma held by those officials.

McBride (2024) presents a case study from Glasgow (Scotland) of a youth-led theatre project that sought to tackle poverty-related and place-based stigma. The project involved young people living in a deprived area of Glasgow designing a play intended to challenge negative stereotypes about their neighbourhoods. The study found that young people living in poverty were able to generate 'alternative narratives' about their neighbourhoods that fostered empathy and understanding across a range of poverty-related issues. For example, a scene depicting homelessness was written and performed with 'evident compassion' for people with lived experience of homelessness and addiction, which the author suggests 'encourage(d) the audience to be critical of assumptions and stereotypes'. McBride (2024) notes that a key challenge lies in mobilising this empathy-generating approach to achieve outcomes that more directly challenge stigma, identifying two key enablers: a well-funded and secure youth work sector, and the ability to reach a wider audience with these 'narratives of resistance'. McBride (2024, p.1112) observes that while assessing audience reception was beyond the study's scope, experience indicated the strength of the play's messages and concludes that 'it is therefore vital to consider how to raise the profile of these alternative narratives'.

Case studies

Published work reflecting on efforts to challenge poverty stigma can be supplemented by a body of work that is best described as potentially promising practice. Several case studies in the **Tackling Poverty Locally Directory** showcase practice that is presented as tackling poverty stigma. SPIRU hosts this Directory, which showcases local work that aims to tackle poverty, providing prospective adopters with a detailed description of each case study and a 'how-to' guide containing information that would enable them to replicate (adapt or adopt) the same approaches in their area. Although the positive impact of many of these case studies is underpinned by an evidence base, details of which are provided in the Directory, caution is required when considering adoption. This is because the purpose of the Directory is to share all practice, including promising work (early signs of positive impact), emerging work (new ideas that have not yet been evaluated), and interventions that have been less successful and from which useful learning can be gleaned, rather than only practice that has been validated as impactful. Case studies included in the Directory are peer reviewed, and classification of practice as 'promising work' and 'emerging work' is confirmed by referees based on the case study text.

Think Poverty is a training programme that has recently been delivered by Falkirk Council, which aims not only to raise awareness of poverty, but to "challenge the stigma surrounding it" (SPIRU, n.d., a). Monthly online sessions are convened with existing staff and new starters, and involve a budgeting activity through which staff are challenged to experience the decision-making pressures faced by people experiencing poverty. It is reported by the organisers that the programme improves staff understanding, increases empathy, and encourages greater dialogue among staff on the issue of poverty.

Similarly, the **Fife Stigma Toolkit** is a cross-agency toolkit designed to promote and improve practice across a wide range of service providers who engage with people experiencing poverty (SPIRU, n.d., b). The Poverty Alliance (2023) worked in partnership with Clued Up, Fife Gingerbread, Citizens Advice and Rights Fife, and the Fife Intensive Rehabilitation and Substance Abuse team (Fife Council) to deliver this work. It is reported that the toolkit has empowered service users and providers to feel more confident in their ability to challenge stigmatising behaviours, and has encouraged reflection on the harm that language can cause and how it contributes to stigmatisation.

More generally, one of the stated aims of shifting to 'cash-first' support is to minimise or eradicate the poverty stigma encountered by those previously in receipt of benefits in kind. For example, the **Household Support Fund**, also delivered by Falkirk Council, highlights the positive impact of this cash-first approach in removing poverty stigma, which is argued to be necessary to ensure that financially stressed households receive all the support to which they are entitled.

Similarly, to provide support without the risk of stigmatisation, **Caledonia Funeral Aid** reports that it is careful not to promote itself as an intervention that tackles poverty directly. Instead, it provides a service that reduces the cost of funerals for those living on low incomes, while working to reduce funeral costs more generally (SPIRU, n.d., c). This reinforces the core message of the WCPP report from 2022 on lived experience, which stressed the need to avoid using deficit-based terms and instead encouraged service providers to adopt asset-based approaches (Carter et al., 2022).

The **Lived Experience Online Forum** is a group convened by Aberdeenshire Council comprising people experiencing poverty across this rural region in northeast Scotland. It aims to provide feedback on 'poverty-mitigating services' and exists to enable the Council to be more responsive to the realities of living in poverty, in order to improve service delivery. One key take-away reported in the Tackling Poverty Locally Directory is that this work has led to the Council 'strengthening its use of inclusive language, which reduces the anxiety and stigma of asking for help and clarifies support pathways' (SPIRU, n.d., d).

During the review, we also became aware of a new project in England working with people who have lived experience of feeling 'out of place' when accessing support services. The aim of this work is to develop a toolkit to help services create more inclusive conditions, and it is led by Dr Rebecca Mead of Lancaster University. Similarly, the second phase of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's **Stigma Free Futures Design** project is expected to generate evidence relevant to tackling poverty stigma, although its primary focus is on prevention. In addition, work is currently underway on poverty-proofing maternity services in England and Wales, which may, as with the Cost of the School Day work discussed earlier, generate new learning on tackling poverty stigma.

Conclusion

We conclude this review with some key messages for policy and practice. We acknowledge that there are limitations in the existing evidence base, which have been taken into account when drawing conclusions on what works to tackle or prevent poverty stigma. There are also examples of promising practice that purport to tackle poverty stigma and that have been showcased in the Tackling Poverty Locally Directory, based in Scotland but drawing on examples from the rest of the UK and beyond. Similarly, our inquiry has drawn on relevant work from the international and UK-based literature.

This review provides insights and learning on a range of approaches across differing policy areas, all of which aim to tackle poverty stigma, and appraises the extent to which these interventions have worked in practice. Key messages for policy and practice include:

- Successful approaches to tackling and preventing poverty stigma are underpinned by common principles, including dignity and respect, and the involvement of people living on low incomes in the design, delivery and evaluation of services.

- Principal lessons for non-stigmatising service provision can be drawn from the everyday procedures of effective services, i.e. provision should be designed with the user in mind, responsive to demand, and based on an assumption of entitlement.

- However, the challenge of tackling stigma should not be underestimated. Stigma can be enduring and deeply embedded, and it is unrealistic to assume that design-based solutions alone can eradicate poverty stigma.

We make the following recommendations to build and strengthen the evidence base on approaches and interventions to tackle and prevent poverty stigma:

- **Greater funding** to support robust evaluations of approaches and interventions that seek to tackle poverty stigma, including evaluations that go beyond the point of intervention conclusion.

- **Active dissemination** in Wales of learning from local-level examples of practice elsewhere in the UK that demonstrate positive impacts on tackling poverty stigma.

- **Further appraisal** of poverty stigma should seek to understand the ways in which poverty-related stigma interconnects with stigma arising from the marginalisation of particular populations and other social problems.

- **Including poverty stigma as an explicit outcome measure** in evaluations of services and interventions for people on low incomes.

- **Identifying and working with poverty stigma experts outside of the UK context** to explore evidence and practice that is proving successful in tackling poverty stigma beyond the UK.

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Annex 1: Review methodology

A Rapid Evidence Review

The brief tasked us with delivering a rapid evidence review. Although this requires accepting limits to the scope and range of the evidence identified and analysed, we adopted a systematic approach that is transparent, approximates the approach of a systematic review, and does not compromise on standards.

Principles

We applied a Realist approach to analysis. Realist evaluation is particularly attuned to the importance of context. It asks what works, for whom, and under what conditions. It is an approach that is particularly well suited to learning lessons and reflecting on their replicability. Realist evaluations do not aim to produce definitive answers, but rather focus on programme mechanisms, including relationships and resources, which effect change.

A Participatory Approach to the Review

As part of the process to develop the protocol for this review, The Poverty Alliance and SPIRU adopted a participatory approach, working with subject experts, experts by experience and practitioners, to enable us to quality assure our approach and sense check our understandings. This development phase took place in September and October 2024 and included:

- **Expert engagement.** In the formative stages of designing the review, we engaged three academic subject experts acknowledged for their research on poverty-based stigma: Professor Imogen Tyler (Lancaster University), Dr Greig Inglis (University of the West of Scotland) and Professor Ben Bamberg Geiger (King's College London). The primary aim of these engagements was to inform the design and scope of this review, and to seek advice on studies that should be included the review.

- **Lived experience engagement.** The Poverty Alliance organised a workshop with a group of lived experience experts, which ensured that the search terms around poverty stigma reflected lived experience.

The Preliminary Search

A preliminary search of selected key terms, not date restricted, using our preferred search tools, led to the conclusion that, for practical reasons and to make best use of the resources available for a rapid evidence review, it would be necessary to carefully restrict searches across the three databases (Table A1).

Table A1: Positive returns using initial search terms

	GCU Discover			Social Sciences Premium			Google Scholar		
	Title	Subj.	AnyF.	Title	Abs.	Text	Title	Abs.	Text
Poverty & Stigma	137	1344	4349	85	1298	36449	188	N.A.	580000
Area & Stigma	78	1549	12995	35	2909	81923	107	N.A.	1300000
Place & Stigma	380	1229	9758	47	1454	87556	99	N.A.	1280000
Neighbourhood & Stigma	56	429	1436	40	504	26263	38	N.A.	166000

Legend: Subj. = subject / Abs. = Abstract / AnyF = Any field / Text = anywhere in article. Title = in title of paper

Three-Stage Evidence Review – Scoping, Screening and Systematic Review

Systematic reviews of evidence typically involve two stages: screening, followed by in-depth review. This review included an initial scoping stage. The aim of this scoping review was two-fold: (i) to gain an understanding of the breadth of the evidence base on poverty stigma; and (ii) to enable decisions to be taken on the substantive fields to be examined in the evidence review proper.

Stage One – Scoping Review

Search strategy

Three bodies of evidence were searched, namely academic research and reviews, grey literature, and practice-based case studies. A bespoke approach to the search was adopted for each.

Academic papers were searched using three routes: (i) GCU Discover (an internal tool for searching Glasgow Caledonian University's extensive collection of freely accessible academic outputs); (ii) Social Sciences Premium Collection (which includes Sociological Abstracts, International Bibliography of the Social Sciences, and Social Services Review, and covers a broad range of bibliographic and abstracting sources across the social sciences); and (iii) Google Scholar.

The grey literature search included an open Google search, limited to the top 200 hits, and a bespoke search of the websites of civil society organisations identified as likely to contain relevant poverty stigma content. These included the Bevan Foundation, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Save the Children, Oxfam, Nuffield Foundation, Mental Health Foundation, Z2K, the Institute of Public Policy Research, National Centre for Social Research, Child Poverty Action Group, the King's Fund, Money and Mental Health Policy Institute, Women's Budget Group, Bristol Poverty Institute, Toynbee Hall, and GMVCO.

Practice-based studies were searched using Google and through a bespoke search of SPIRU's Tackling Poverty Locally Directory.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were agreed in collaboration with the Wales Centre for Public Policy (Table A2). These criteria were applied judiciously, with exceptions made for work falling outside the inclusion criteria where it was considered to be of exceptional importance. Academic searches were conducted between October and November 2024 using six search strings (Table A2). Grey literature searches used variations of words from these search strings. Evidence identified through formal searches was supplemented by recommendations from expert stakeholders and the Wales Centre for Public Policy team.

Table A2: Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Domain	Inclusion	Exclusion
Currency	2010-2024	Papers published before 2010*
Geography	Advanced economies	Papers from less developed nations*
Substantive field	To be determined after the Scoping Review	Papers outside the substantive fields of interest*
Language	English-language publications	Non-English language publications, although we were open to working with WCPP to incorporate papers written in Welsh that appeared to be of particular significance
Quality Control	Papers that meet TPA/ SPIRU quality thresholds	Opinion pieces and papers for which evidence base is judged weak.
Stigma focus	Include action to tackle stigma	Papers that do not examine solutions to poverty stigma.

These main searches were supplemented by four additional searches: 'chav' (search 3), 'poverty porn' (search 4), 'neighbo??hood stigma' (search 5), and 'area or place AND stigma' (search 6), in either the title or abstract. The terms 'chav' (a derogatory descriptor applied to some people experiencing poverty) and 'poverty porn' (a term used to critique popular media portrayals of poverty as entertainment) were considered potential sources of literature on poverty stigma.

Given the aim of the study to examine prospects for place-based interventions and national or regional policies to tackle stigma, it was also decided to examine place-based stigma, on the understanding that it is often associated with areas experiencing multiple deprivation and socio-economic disadvantage. Poverty and place, and associated stigmatisation, were captured through searches 5 and 6, with neighbourhood searched in a way that captured both UK and US spelling (hence the use of ??).

Search results

Collectively, these six searches generated 3,248 hits (Table A3).

Table A3: Positive returns using in scoping review, by search string

S1	title((poverty OR poor OR deprived OR deprivation) AND (stigma OR stereotype OR shame OR discrimination)) AND stype.exact("Conference Papers & Proceedings" OR "Books" OR "Working Papers" OR "Scholarly Journals" OR "Dissertations & Theses")	1098
S2	Abstract(poverty /s stigma) AND stype.exact("Conference Papers & Proceedings" OR "Books" OR "Working Papers" OR "Scholarly Journals" OR "Dissertations & Theses")	1462
S3	abstract(chav) OR title(chav) AND stype.exact("Conference Papers & Proceedings" OR "Books" OR "Working Papers" OR "Scholarly Journals" OR "Dissertations & Theses")	139
S4	abstract("poverty porn") OR title("poverty porn") AND stype.exact("Conference Papers & Proceedings" OR "Books" OR "Working Papers" OR "Scholarly Journals" OR "Dissertations & Theses")	53
S5	abstract("neighbo??hood stigma") OR title("neighbo??hood stigma") AND stype.exact("Conference Papers & Proceedings" OR "Books" OR "Working Papers" OR "Scholarly Journals" OR "Dissertations & Theses")	68
S6	title((area OR place) AND stigma) AND stype.exact("Conference Papers & Proceedings" OR "Books" OR "Working Papers" OR "Scholarly Journals" OR "Dissertations & Theses")	230

Stage Two – Screening Review

Data Cleaning – Removal of Double Entries

Before papers from the academic literature could be screened, it was necessary to remove 'double hits', as much content was identified more than once across the three searches conducted. This reduced the list of candidate articles for review to 1,620, following the removal of 1,628 duplicate records (Table A4).

Part One – Initial Classification

The screening process progressed through several stages. Initially, Professor McKendrick read the title, and where necessary the abstract, of academic papers identified through the scoping exercise and classified each paper into one of five main categories. It was also noted whether an article fell within one of these categories but was not written in English, as some titles and abstracts were available in English for articles written in another language. In addition, articles that did not appear to focus on poverty and stigma, as well as book reviews.

- Studies that focus specifically on poverty stigma

- Studies that do not focus on poverty stigma, but which might be worth considering to contextualise the review

- Studies that focus on stigma, but not poverty stigma

- Studies in which poverty, stigma and poverty stigma are considered, but where the study has a different purpose and does not specifically explore poverty stigma)

- Studies that do not focus on poverty stigma (this may include studies on poverty that do not focus on stigma)

- Studies that focus specifically on poverty stigma and are not written in English

- Studies that do not focus on poverty stigma, but which might be worth considering to contextualise the review and are not written in English

- Studies that focus on stigma, but not poverty stigma and are not written in English

- Studies in which poverty, stigma and poverty stigma are considered, but where the study has a different purpose and does not specifically explore poverty stigma, and which are not written in English

- Studies that do not focus on poverty stigma (this might include studies on poverty that do not focus on stigma) and which are not written in English

- Other unclassified articles not written in English

- Book reviews

As the focus of this review was on articles that addressed poverty stigma and were written in English, this exercise significantly reduced the number of candidate academic articles from 1,620 to 266 (Table A5). A parallel exercise identified a further 29 candidate papers from the grey and government literature searches.

Table A4: Classification following initial article screening

1	Studies that focus specifically on poverty stigma	266
2	Studies that do not focus on poverty stigma, but which might be worth considering to contextualise the review	41
3	Studies that focus on stigma, but not poverty stigma	217
4	Studies in which poverty, stigma and poverty stigma are considered, but the study has a different purpose and does not specifically explore poverty stigma)	570
5	Studies that do not focus on poverty stigma (this may include studies on poverty that do not focus on stigma)	419
10	Other unclassified articles not written in English	11
11	Book reviews	42
21	'Doubles', where the same paper was identified by more than one search	202
22	'Doubles', where a paper was listed more than once within the same search	1426
1(10)	Studies that focus specifically on poverty stigma and are not written in English	11
2(10)	Studies that do not focus on poverty stigma, but which might be worth considering to contextualise the review and are not written in English	2
3(10)	Studies that focus on stigma, but not poverty stigma / and are not written in English	8
4(10)	Studies in which poverty, stigma and poverty stigma are considered, but where the study has a different purpose and does not specifically explore poverty stigma, and which are not written in English	12
5(10)	Studies that do not focus on poverty stigma (this might include studies on poverty that do not focus on stigma) and which are not written in English	20

Part Two – Quality Assurance Check of Articles Classified Beyond the Scope of the Review

SPIRU junior researchers were briefed on the purpose of the research and the classification scheme used to appraise potential articles (Annex A4). Ten researchers were allocated a batch of approximately 100 articles that were classified either '3' (studies that focus on stigma, but not poverty stigma), '4' (studies in which poverty, stigma, and poverty stigma are considered, but the study has a different purpose and does not specifically explore poverty stigma) or '5' (studies that do not focus on poverty stigma, which may include studies on poverty that do not focus on stigma) (refer to Table A4). Each researcher was tasked with confirming the original classification, or making a recommendation for change and providing an explanation. These recommendations were then re-appraised by Professor McKendrick before confirming the final classifications of articles originally classified as 3, 4 or 5. As reported in Table A5, this led to 12 reclassifications (cells highlighted in green for rows 3, 4 and 5).

Researchers were not asked to appraise articles classified as 1 and 2 (which would be reviewed separately) or 10, 11, 21 and 22, nor any article not written in English (as these had already been ruled out) (refer to Table A4). These reclassifications did not result in the addition of any candidate articles for the review proper.

Table A5: Re-classifications following initial article screening

	Classification after scoping review														
	1	1B	2	3	4	5	10	11	21	22	1(10)	2(10)	3(10)	4(10)	5(10)
1	198	22	2	22	20	1		1		1					
2			41												
3				210	6	1									
4				3	542	23		2							
5						419									
10							11								
11								42							
21									202						
22										1426					
1(10)											11				
2(10)												2			
3(10)													8		
4(10)														12	
5(10)															20
Total	198	22	43	235	568	443	11	43	204	1427	11	2	8	12	20

Original classification review

Notes: Refer to Table A4 for definitions of the categories used in the classification.

Part Three – Quality Assurance Check of Articles Classified as Being Within the Scope of the Review

Two SPIRU senior researchers were briefed on the purpose of the research and the classification scheme used to appraise potential articles (Annex A4). Each researcher was asked to review one half of the 266 articles originally classified as '1' (candidates for review, as they appeared to focus on poverty stigma) (Table A4). The same ten SPIRU junior researchers who completed the quality check in Part Two were also given a proportionate share of articles to review. Therefore, each of the 266 candidate articles was appraised by one senior and one junior SPIRU researcher.

This review extended beyond a rapid appraisal of the title and/or abstract. Each researcher completed a Data Screening Tool to capture key information on each article. Where these data could not be identified from the title and abstract, the full text was available for consultation.

- Substantive focus

- Population group

- Research Method deployed

- Geography

- Scale

Furthermore, judgements were made on:

- the prominence of poverty stigma in the article;

- whether the causes of poverty stigma were considered;

- whether the implications of poverty stigma were considered; and

- whether solutions to address poverty stigma were considered.

Professor McKendrick considered both appraisals of each article and resolved any differences of opinion to decide how each article should be described. As Table A5 reports, this resulted in the reclassification of 47 candidate articles (blue cells) and an acknowledgement that insufficient data were available for a further 22 articles (classified as 1B). Titles were provided for these articles, but no abstracts were available to profile and confirm the classification. Following this exercise, 198 articles appeared to be candidate articles for review. The Poverty Alliance identified a further two articles that had not been captured, which were added to the list of candidate sources.

Part Four – Identifying Articles with a Strong Focus on Tackling Poverty Stigma

The data screening tool in Part Three also helped to identify articles that appeared to be more sharply focused on tackling poverty stigma.

- Poverty stigma is the main focus of the article, and the article examines stigma responses: 61 papers (9 grey literature papers and 52 academic articles).

- Poverty stigma is a key theme of the article, and the article examines stigma responses: 86 papers (12 grey literature papers and 74 academic articles).

In December, the project team met with the WCPP and Welsh Government officials to discuss how the scope of the review could be narrowed. At this stage, a decision was made to focus on articles for which poverty stigma is the main focus, while excluding academic dissertations, theoretical papers, opinion pieces and commentaries. This reduced the number of candidate articles to 29.

Part Five – Full Text Screening of Articles for which Poverty Stigma was a Main Focus and which had a Tackling Poverty Stigma Focus

At the transition from screening (stage two) to systematic review (stage three), it became apparent that a round of full-text screening was required. While some papers met the inclusion criteria and appeared, from the title and abstract, to be candidate articles, it became clear that not all would provide policy and practice learning on tackling poverty stigma. Consequently, a fifth and final step was introduced: a rapid full-text screening of each candidate paper, conducted by three team members (each paper screened by one team member). Where there was uncertainty around inclusion or exclusion, two team members met to discuss and agree whether the paper should be included. By the end of the screening process, papers were included only where there was clear learning for policy and practice.

The final number of sources included comprised 12 academic journal articles, 10 grey literature texts and one working paper. This included four papers identified by the WCPP that were added to the final review at a later stage, in March 2025.

Stage Three – Data Extraction

To develop a data extraction tool, three team members independently examined two papers to agree standardised data extraction procedures. The data extraction tool was then developed collaboratively, involving the whole team. The tool built on the data collected through the data screening tool earlier in the screening process (stage two, part three):

1. **Aims:** was there a clear statement of the aims of the paper

2. **Ethical Issues:** were they considered

3. **Findings:** was clear statement of findings

4. **Fit – Data collection/Issue:** was data collected in a way that addressed research issue

5. **Fit – Design/Aims:** was research design appropriate to address aims

6. **Fit – Recruitment/Aims:** was recruitment strategy appropriate to aims

7. **Methodology Appropriate:** was a qualitative methodology appropriate

8. **Research Relationships:** between research and research adequately considered

9. **Rigour in Analysis:** was data analysis sufficiently rigourous

10. **Theory:** Are theoretical underpinnings clear, consistent and coherent

11. **Value of research:** how valuable is the research

Two team members used the tool to extract data from two papers separately and then came together to discuss whether any revisions were needed. Having confirmed that no revisions were necessary, the remaining data extraction was completed individually. The diverse range of sources and forms of evidence in the literature meant it was not possible to extract data in an identical way in each case; however, consistency was maintained through the application of a standardised and rigorous process.

A summary of the process through which academic articles were selected is provided in Table A6.

Table A6: Academic Articles – From Search to Appraisal

	Stage	Explanation
Stage 1: Scoping	Records identified through database searching (n = 3248)	Six search strings deployed over three databases, two of which aggregated sources (GCU Discover and Social Sciences Premium Collection). Google Scholar was the third source searched
	Records after duplicates removed (n = 1620)	Some duplicate hits were found within databases, but most were those that were reported in more than one database.
	Records after non-English papers removed (n = 1556)	Removed purely for practical reasons. There may have been relevant learning within these papers
	Records after removal of studies that clearly do not focus on poverty stigma (n = 266)	First round of substantive content analysis (screening). Appraisal of title and abstract to reduce candidate articles.
	Records after quality assurance check to confirm classification (n = 198)	Second round of appraisal of abstract and title.
Stage 2: Screening	Additional records identified through other sources (n = 200)	Poverty Alliance identified two papers that were not captured in the database screening
	Records after screening to confirm 'main focus' of article and 'focus on addressing stigma' (n = 52)	Research team appraisal of "poverty-stigma" to ensure that it is the main focus of the article, and that the interest is in tackling poverty stigma (and not 'only' exploring causes and consequences)
	Records after focusing on journal articles (n = 29)	Identifying those which are peer-reviewed journal articles
Stage 3: Appraisal	Records after rapid full-text screening (n = 19)	Rapid reading of candidate articles to ensure that the primary focus of the
	Records after supplementary addition of papers related to social security (n = 25)	WCPP identified six papers that were not captured in the review.

Annex 2: Included papers

Title	Publication year	Authors
Informed outrage: tackling shame and stigma in poverty education in social work	2016	Beddoe, L., & Keddell, E.
Does tackling poverty related barriers to education improve school outcomes? Evidence from the North East of England	2024	Beeson, M., Wildman, J.M. & Wildman, J.
Addressing stigma and shame in the use of affordable foodbanks (Rapid Review)	no date	Birmingham City Council
Countering stigma-power: An ethnographic case study of an independent community food hub	2023	Brennan-Tovey, K., Board, E. & Fulton, J.
Tenure Mixing to Combat Public Housing Stigmatization: external benefits, internal challenges and contextual influences in three Dublin neighbourhoods	2018	Carnegie, A., Norris, M., & Byrne, M.
Forecast Social Return on Investment Analysis of the Co-location of Advice Workers with Consensual Access to Individual Medical Records in Medical Practices	2017	Carrick, K., Burton, K. and Barclay, P.
Reconstructing Poverty-Related Shame Among Urban Seniors in China: an Exploration of Their Narrated Experiences and a Reflection on Anti-Poverty Interventions	2020	Chen, Y., Hong, L., & Walker, R.
Improving Secondary School Food Provision: Barriers and Solutions	2023	CPAG
There Is Such a Thing as a Free Lunch: School Meals, Stigma, and Student Discipline	2024	Domina, T., Clark, L., Radsky, V., & Bhaskar, R.
Stigma and Social Housing in England	2021	Ejiogu, A. and Denedo, M.
Poverty and shame - messages for social work	2015	Gupta, A.

Substantive Field	Population	Method	National Context	MMAT score
Education	Young Adults	not relevant	UK	Not relevant
Education	Children and young people	Quantitative	UK	4 (authors note that there may have been some non-compliance by intervention schools)
Food	All	Review	UK	Not relevant
Food	Adult service users and volunteers	Ethnographic study	UK	5
Housing	Others	Case study	Ireland	2 (limited information on research design and methods)
Health	Population experiencing poverty	Mixed methods	UK	MMAT appraisal tool does not align with SROI methodology
Lived Experience	Pensioners	Primary Interview	China	5
Food	Children	Unknown	UK	No detail on methodology
Food	Children	Secondary Admin Data	USA	4
Housing	Social housing	Multi-methods	UK	Not relevant
Education	Others	Case Study	UK	Not relevant

Title	Publication year	Authors
Rusty gardens: stigma and the making of a new place reputation in Buffalo, New York	2023	Hohle, R.
UK Cost of the School Day Final Evaluation	2023	Laing, K., Thomas, U., Tiplady, L. & Todd, L.
Improving delivery of the social security safety net: The role of stigma	2023	Lasky-Fink, J. and Linos, E.
Poverty Proofing the School Day: Evaluation and Development Report	2016	Mazzoli-Smith, L. & Todd, T.
Young people, place-based stigma and resistance: A case study of Glasgow's East End	2024	McBride, M.
Longitudinal impact of a poverty simulation on healthcare practitioners' attitudes towards poverty	2022	Murray, P. M., Sepulveda, A. & Baird, J.
Local food hubs in deprived areas: de-stigmatising food poverty?	2019	Psarikidou, K., Kaloudis, H., Fielden, A., & Reynolds, C.
Access, dignity, and choice: social supermarkets and the end of the food bank model in the UK?	2024	Ranta, R., Nancheva, N., Mulrooney, H., Bhakta, D. & Lake, S.
CPG on Poverty- Inquiry into Poverty stigma in Scotland	2023	Scottish Parliament Cross-party Group on Poverty
The impact of stigma on benefit take-up: Report of a Get Heard Scotland Citizens' Panel	2024	The Poverty Alliance
'It's not that bad': Stigma, health, and place in a post-industrial community	2016	Thomas, GM.
Poverty Stigma: A Glue that Holds Poverty in Place	2024	Tyler, I., & Campbell, S.

Substantive Field	Population	Method	National Context	MMAT score
Tourism	Others	Mixed Method	USA	5
Education	Children and young people	Multi-methods qualitative	UK	Not enough detail on methodology provided
Social security	Population experiencing poverty	Randomised field experiment	U.S.	4
Education	Children and young people	Multi-methods qualitative	UK	Not enough information on methodology provided
Art	Young Adults	Case Study	UK	5
Health	Population experiencing poverty	Mixed methods	U.S.	2 (convenience sampling and attrition throughout the study period)
Food	Population experiencing poverty	Mixed methods	UK	4
Food	Adult service users	Questionnaire and interviews	UK	5
Poverty stigma	All	Consultation	UK	Not relevant
Social Security	Population experiencing poverty	Qualitative	UK	Not relevant
Health	Youth	Interviews	UK	5
Poverty stigma	All	not relevant	UK	Not relevant

Title	Publication year	Authors
Tackling poverty stigma workshops	2024	Wales Centre for Public Policy
Poverty in Global Perspective: Is Shame a Common Denominator?	2013	Walker, R., Kyomuhendo, Bantebya, G., Chase, E., Sohail, C., Gubrium, E., Nicola, Jy., Lødemel, I., Mathew, L., Mwiine, A., Pellissery, S., & Ming, Y

Substantive Field	Population	Method	National Context	MMAT score
Poverty stigma	All	not relevant	UK	Not relevant
Social Policy (Local)	Population experiencing poverty	Secondary Document Analysis	Lived experiences of poverty in 7 countries (Uganda, India, China, Pakistan, South Korea, UK, Norway)	5

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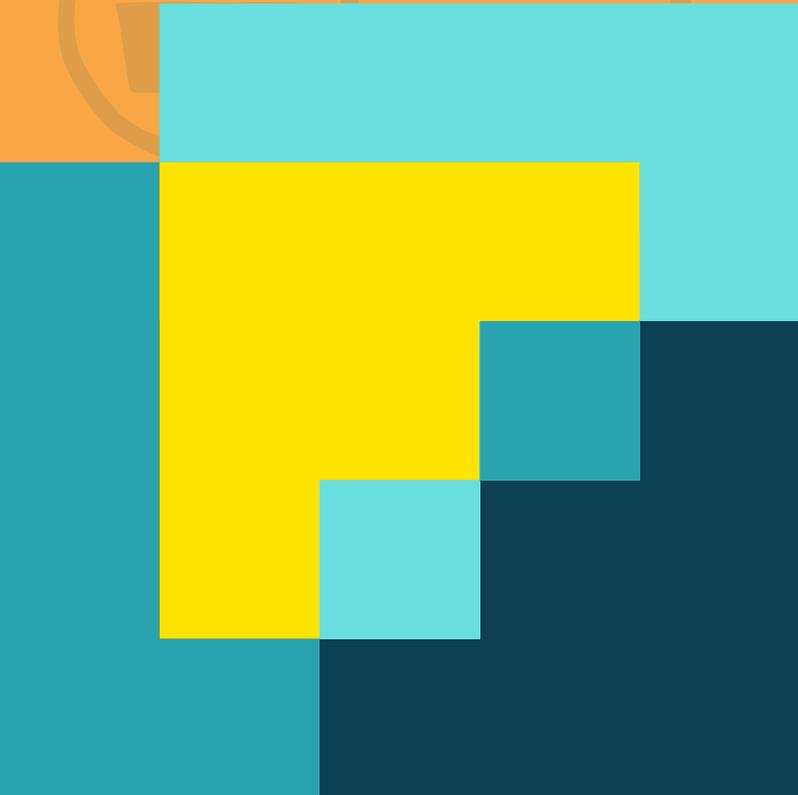Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit

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