

# Second Meeting of the Poverty and Inequality Commission

Friday, 13th October 2017

10am – 12.30

COSLA Conference Centre, Edinburgh

## Commission Attendees

Douglas Hamilton; *Chair*, Naomi Eisenstadt; *Deputy Chair*, Kaliani Lyle; *Deputy Chair*, David Eiser, Hugh Foy, Caroline Kennedy, Katie Schmuecker, Sally Witcher

## Scottish Government attendees

Paul Tyrer; Head of Social Justice Strategy, Tom Lamplugh; Head of Social Policy Unit, Katherine Hudson; appointed Secretariat Manager, Michele Barr; appointed Secretariat Administrator

## Glasgow University attendees

Des McNulty; Deputy Director of Policy Scotland

## Notes

Andrew Fraser; *Interim Support to Commission*

## Items

### 1. Introductions

Douglas opened the meeting and introduced the newly appointed secretariat who will join the Commission later in October.

Des McNulty provided an overview of Policy Scotland, who will provide analytical support to the Commission until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018.

Commissioners stressed the importance of the Inclusive Growth Agenda and holding the Scottish Government to account in its delivery.

Commissioners agreed that events should be circulated as early as possible amongst the Commission and that an appropriate means to disseminate learning should be undertaken following attendance.

### 2. Matters Arising

Douglas confirmed, and Commissioners agreed, that no further appointments would be made to the Commission at this stage. That is not to say that further appointments will not be considered in future.

An update of various matters relating to the Commission was given;

- A new logo has been produced, and will feature on Commission paperwork etc
- Contracts for Public Relations support and for a dedicated Commission website are near agreement

- Commissioners raised that language used should be appropriate and sensitive to the subject matter, and that all events should be accessible.
- Commissioners will consider if the Joseph Rowntree Foundations guidelines for communications could be adapted for their purposes
- The Governance Document has been finalised and agreed
- Douglas and Kaliani reported on their meeting with the SG chief economist

### **3. “We can solve poverty”**

An overview of JRF’s report “We Can Solve UK Poverty” was provided by Katie Schmuecker.

This was a 4 year programme of work, creating an all age poverty strategy rooted in evidence.

#### **Key Points**

- The JRF definition of poverty is ‘when a person’s resources (mainly their material resources) are not sufficient to meet their minimum needs (including social participation)’
- The Strategy highlights **5 main causes of poverty**
- JRF estimates that poverty costs the UK £78 billion each year (4% of GDP)
- JRF developed a 5 point plan to reduce poverty and identified 6 steps to reduce child poverty
- Reducing poverty is not only a role for government; communities, employers and others must all contribute.

It was agreed that the JRF analysis provides a useful starting point for the work of the Commission relating to the Child Poverty Bill. Commissioners then went on to discuss how the additional costs of disability are considered within household incomes. A suggestion was made that the Commission should take a human rights approach to its work

### **4. The powers available to the Scottish Parliament**

David Eiser delivered a presentation around the powers which the Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament has to address poverty and inequality.

These included;

- Existing government powers
- Devolved taxation
- New social security powers
- Restrictions in place through budgets

Commissioners discussed that more thinking was likely required around SG and UK government policy changes and reserved powers.

It was suggested that the Commission may want to look at:

- The recent history of policy changes and consider what has been effective in making a positive impact, eg. reduction in poverty of older people
- Prioritisation between different good causes
- Transitions at different points during the life course
- How local and central governments interact

## **5. Responding to the letter from the Cabinet Secretary**

Douglas gave an overview of the request for advice from the Cabinet Secretary and welcomed initial reactions and thoughts from the Commission.

The Commission agreed the process / timeframe for the advice and that sign off would be required in January. They highlighted that the timeframe was tight and that this would limit what could be done, however the Commission can draw on work that has already been done by the likes of JRF.

They agreed that the advice for the delivery plan takes precedence and that this will inform the advice for the Tackling Child Poverty fund.

In addition to advice on specific themes, it was suggested that the Commission could also advise on the format of the plan and the process for monitoring process.

Further discussion focused on the main policy areas that what would influence the targets, namely employment and pay, social security, and housing costs. Commissioners agreed that the advice should set out a clear message on the use of the new welfare powers, and recognised that there will be competing demands on how these powers should be used. It will also be important to recognise tensions between person centred and place based approaches; and between preventative and 'worst first' approaches.

Commissioners summarised at least five things they need to know to inform their advice:

1. Analysis of who are the families living in poverty in Scotland, broken down by geography, household size, protected characteristics, etc
2. Poverty projections for Scotland
3. What are the key policy areas to focus on, and what is SG doing in these areas?
4. The extent of the income gap that needs to be addressed to meet the 2030 targets.
5. An analytical piece on how much it would take to achieve the targets and the extent to which particular actions will make an impact. Eg What would it take to reduce poverty? i.e. if benefit uptake was 100% benefit uptake, increase to value of benefits, movement of parents into work, etc.

Policy Scotland are to be asked to set out a proposal as to how they could provide this analysis, whilst recognising that some of the data may already be available in other places.

## **6. Commission work plan**

This item will be discussed further at the next meeting, Commissioners were invited to think about items for consideration and provide feedback.

## **7. Next Meeting**

- The next meeting will be on 7 November in Edinburgh
- The following meeting will be 12 December and will likely take place in Glasgow

## **8. AOB**

- The Commission discussed who will physically write the advice to Ministers
- SG Programme for Government confirms the ask of the Commission regarding a Citizens Basic Income / Universal Basic Income. There is no immediate ask regarding this but it was noted that there are opportunities to get involved with some of the pilot areas at an early stage.