

First Meeting of the Poverty and Inequality Commission

Tuesday, 5th September 2017

10am – 12.30

Standard Life House, 30 Lothian Rd, Edinburgh EH1 2DH

Commission Attendees

Douglas Hamilton; *Chair*, Naomi Eisenstadt; *Deputy Chair*, Kaliani Lyle; *Deputy Chair*, David Eiser, Hugh Foy, Caroline Kennedy, Katie Schmuecker
Apologies are issued on behalf of Sally Witcher

Scottish Government attendees

Shirley Laing; *Deputy Director, Social Justice and Regeneration*, Paul Tyrer; *Head of Social Justice Strategy*, Liz Hawkins; *Head of Equality and Social Justice Analysis (Observer)*, Gillian Cross; *Child Poverty Bill Team Leader*.

Notes

Andrew Fraser; *Interim Support to Commission*

Actions

- Douglas to circulate list of stakeholders met by Commission so far
- Douglas to circulate note of the Poverty Alliance roundtable event when available
- Scottish Government analytical colleagues to provide further detail of the request for projections
- Douglas to circulate request from the Cabinet Secretary once received
- Scottish Government Bill team to share stage 3 dates once known
- Commissioners to review Governance Document and provide any feedback / comments to Douglas by 12/09/17
- Douglas to speak to SG Chief Economist regarding focus of the Council of Economic Advisers (13/09/17) – feed back to Commissioners

Items

1. Welcome

Douglas set out a brief background to the Commission and the progress made to date, highlighting that one Commissioner is still to be appointed. He is meeting a potential final Commissioner soon and is hopeful they will be appointed before the next meeting.

Douglas noted that the Commissioners appointed are all experts who are all also absolutely committed to making a positive change.

Ms Constance was unable to attend as the meeting clashed with the first meeting of cabinet in the new parliamentary session. She is keen to meet Commissioners as soon as possible, provisionally this will be 12 Oct (pm).

2. Introductions

Commissioners were offered time to speak to one another and provided a brief introduction outlining their background.

3. Commission Remit

The head of the Social Justice Strategy Unit delivered a short presentation on the remit of the Commission, informed by the position paper published in July.

Key Points

- The Commission is set up for 2 years initially, subject to further consideration by the Scottish Parliament as to whether the Commission should be placed on a statutory footing.
- £100,000 budget for 7 months this year.
- Lead Minister – Cabinet Secretary for Communities Social Security and Equalities, Angela Constance
- Currently recruiting secretariat manager and an administrator, those appointed will likely attend the next meeting.

Further clarification was provided around support to the Commission

- Discussions are on-going with Glasgow University for analytical support, this will be in place for 6 months and a grant will be made to Policy Scotland. Chris Chapman will be the main point of contact and key academics such as Nick Bailey and Annette Hastings will be involved.
- Early discussions are being held with JRF about work that can be commissioned together.
- Separate Comms support for the Commissioner will be procured.
- A Website is being procured and should be ready at the end of the year.

4. What do we want to achieve?

Douglas set out some initial thoughts about what the Commission may wish to achieve;

- **Solution focused** – not just describing the problem
- **About numbers and people** – reducing the big numbers in poverty but also ensuring that solutions work for everyone
- **Honest** – bringing honesty and clarity to the debate, being pragmatic and realistic about action required
- **Courageous** - having the will to say what is right, not what is easy
- **Concerned with People** – not lost in statistics, but focused on the lives of individuals.
- **Influential**

Following discussion, other views were expressed as to what the Commission should be, which included being;

- **Realistic** that the Commission cannot solve all problems
- **People focused** – putting people at the heart of what we do
- **The voice of the voiceless** – tackling stigma and recognising the needs of those who are under represented
- **Educational** – helping wider society understand the challenges and building a consensus to action
- **Courageous** – prepared to take a stand that may be at odds with others
- **Collegiate** – offering support where positive steps are being taken

Measures of success included;

- Having an influence on policy
- Seeing real change for disadvantaged groups

Some initial ideas for the future workplan were suggested:

- Analysis of redistributive taxation
- Universal Basic Income
- Commenting on the budget published in December, noting the recommendations of the Budget Process Review Group;
<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/100930.aspx>
- Childcare for school aged children
- Looking in detail at the work undertaken by the various fairness Commissions, how do they link together, what recommendations have been made, what impact have they had etc

5. Child Poverty Bill

An overview of the Child Poverty (Scotland) Bill was provided by the Bill Team Leader. Officials confirmed that the request for advice would be issued by the Cabinet Secretary in the coming weeks.

The Bill, introduced in February, is undergoing Parliamentary scrutiny with the third stage scheduled to take place in November. At this point there will be a debate, with some amendments lodged to tidy and refine the Bill.

The key elements of the Bill include;

- Income Targets to be met by 2030
 - Interim targets to be met by 2023
- Duties on Ministers to publish
 - Delivery plans 2018, 2022, 2026
 - Annual progress reports
 - Interim and Final progress reports, outlining whether targets have been met
- Duty on Local Authorities and Health Boards to produce annual reports; action taken and a forward look
- Provisions for a statutory Poverty and Inequality Commission

Officials confirmed that child poverty projections will be obtained from Landman Economics on Scotland level data, to analyse policies being put in place through the delivery plan. The final version of this report will be available in January; with a draft in November, which will be updated with budget info.

The Child Poverty Measurement Framework sits alongside the headline targets and is being reviewed and considered with stakeholders; many measures will be around parental income, the current framework can be reviewed at <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/12/6196/downloads>

6. Governance and Secretariat

Douglas provided an overview of the document and highlighted key areas for consideration, Commissioners will review the governance document and an agreed version, taking account of changes will be circulated.

- Minutes of meetings will be agreed by Commissioners and circulated prior to publication.
- Douglas extended the invitation for Commissioners to join him, and Deputy Chairs, at stakeholder meetings.

7. Advocacy: Engaging business

Sandy MacDonald, Head of Sustainability at Standard Life Aberdeen provided a short overview on issues that the Commission may wish to consider, and how best to engage business in the work of the Commission.

Areas of activity suggested for consideration by the Commission

- Housing – accessibility
- Employment
- The Poverty Premium
- Equality of opportunity and importance of place
- Interventions at key points
- Connections between different tiers; who is best placed to influence at each level; i.e. those not in work, those with multiple barriers etc
- Cultural Aspects; stigma against those who are disadvantaged
- How do you address those who stand to lose?
- Make link between 'macro, systemic issues' and 'micro, practical, real aspects'

Business – What to consider

- Business can be perceived as a bad thing, however they are responsible for creating products and services, the biggest investors in business are peoples pensions
- Making shareholders money is not intrinsically a bad thing; that's people's pensions, retirement savings, etc
- It is important to understand motivations of different businesses; consider size, sector etc
- The current approach to Living Wage and social mobility celebrate the benefits and recognise that change is difficult (particularly retail / care)

5 Key Considerations for success

- Evidence – meets the need, hearts and minds
- Celebrating success, make people feel good about what they're doing!
- Public commitments
- Senior advocacy
- Partnerships and relationships

As a general rule; Make it easy, desirable and relevant

8. Dates of next meetings

- The next meeting will be undertaken on 13 October in Edinburgh
- Dates for meetings next year will be explored by the Chair in the coming weeks

9. AOB

- Commissioners discussed how to deal with any questions about individual's positions on issues that may also be relevant to the work of the Commission. It was agreed that Commissioners should be clear as to when they are talking as individuals and when they are talking as members of the Commission. The Commission's agreed position will be reflected within its publications, and these should be referred to when talking about the Commission's views.