

Chair of the Poverty and Inequality Commission
Bill Scott



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Aileen Campbell
Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government

By email

6 February 2020

Dear Aileen,

I am writing to follow up on the publication of the recent progress report on the Fairer Scotland Action Plan, Shifting the Curve and Life Chances of Young People. The Commission have considered this report and I welcomed the opportunity to discuss our views with you at our recent meeting on 9 January 2020.

I highlighted the aspects of the report which the Commission found positive. We appreciate the more efficient approach of streamlining the actions from three similar reports. We also welcome the extensive action which is being undertaken and the real commitment to tackling poverty and inequality. We are impressed with the strong evidence of cross-government working and the involvement of partners.

However, **there is little in the report in terms of measuring outcomes or the impact of actions and investment.** That is, there is both a lack of hard data and little of the views of people with direct lived experience of poverty. It is therefore very difficult for the Commission to assess if the actions, policies, strategies and investment discussed are actually making the difference to people's lives which both the Government and ourselves wish to see.

As you know, the Commission was planning on scrutinising this report as part of its role in monitoring progress in tackling poverty and inequality. However, we have decided not to conduct a detailed scrutiny exercise at this point as we feel there is not yet sufficient information provided on outcomes and impact. So, as we discussed, I am grateful that you are open to considering how the Commission can be provided with the information it needs in order to fulfil its scrutiny role. We hope that in future we will be able to point to the steps the Scottish Government is taking to better evidence how things are progressing.

We are now looking ahead to the progress report on the Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan. As you know, it is outlined in the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 that the Commission be consulted in the development of this progress report. The Commission plans to look in depth at a small number of policy areas. As part of this consultation, we will be happy to discuss with officials what different types of information and evidence on these policy areas could be included in this report.

The Commission will also be publishing an annual scrutiny report in early autumn. At this point, we will scrutinise the actions, investment and progress that has been made in the previous year. It will cover Budget decisions, Programme for Government announcements and published progress updates (including the Local Child Poverty Action Reports). It will also consider the Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland statistics and what we have learnt from people with direct lived experience of poverty.

We recognise that fully evidencing impact and outcomes is likely to be challenging and, again, I would like to offer the full support of the Commission in developing a systematic and meaningful approach, starting with the Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan progress report. We need to be able to celebrate the areas where things are working and constructively challenge where we think a different approach might be needed. It is only when we have a full understanding of what is working and what is not that we can make more significant progress in unlocking people from poverty.



Bill Scott
Chair of Poverty and Inequality Commission