



Meeting of the Poverty and Inequality Commission

Thursday 19 December 2019
10:00am – 3pm
COSLA, Edinburgh

Commission Attendees

Bill Scott, Chair

Commissioners

Shona Stephen
Professor Morag Treanor
Lindsay Graham
Douglas White
Yvonne Blake
Alex Cobham

Dialling in

Katie Schmuecker

Apologies

Linda Bamford

Secretariat Attendees

Katherine Hudson, Secretariat Manager
Katherine Myant, Analytical Manager
Michele Barr, Secretariat/Administrator

Expert Attendees Afternoon session

David Eiser, Fraser of Allander Institute
Russell Gunson, IPPR Scotland
Lucy O'Carroll, Scottish Government
Adrian Sinfield, Edinburgh University

Apologies

Shona Glenn, Scottish Land Commission

1. Welcome and apologies

Bill Scott welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were given for Linda Bamford and Shona Glen. Bill Scott welcomed Katie Schmuecker who was dialling into the meeting.

2. Communication Strategy

Katherine Hudson presented the Commission's Communication and Engagement Strategy. The Commissioners agreed the purpose and the principles of the strategy. The Commissioners agreed to produce Easy Read versions of Executive Summaries of reports, and to produce engagement material for Commission events in Easy Read format. The Commissioners agreed they would like to use the Frameworks Institute approach on how to talk about poverty; the secretariat will arrange training for the Commissioners on the framework toolkit. Katie Schmuecker offered to provide some training to Commissioners on vlogging. The Commissioners will try various methods of communicating, including vlogging, blogging, tweets, short video clips and animations to see what impact they have. The Commission will prepare a communications strategy for each piece of work it undertakes.

The Commission aims to make events accessible to people with lived experience of poverty and the secretariat will explore various solutions that allows the Commission to pay costs to those attending events. The secretariat will also look at how the Commission could pay a fee to people with lived experience who are participating in a working group or doing work such as writing blogs for the Commission. The Commission will send out an email newsletter every two months to its mailing list and elected representatives at local and national level.

3. Freedom of Information policy

Katherine Hudson updated Commissioners on the Freedom of Information legislation and made Commissioners aware that information held by Commissioners is subject to Freedom of Information requests. She gave an overview of the Commission's process for responding to FOI requests. Bill Scott agreed to consider and approve decisions for any FOI requests received to the Commission. Lindsay Graham and Linda Bamford (by email prior to the meeting) agreed to consider and approve any FOI reviews.

4. Scrutiny of the Fairer Scotland Action Plan Progress Report

Katherine Myant gave an overview of the Scottish Government's Fairer Scotland Action Plan, Shifting the Curve and Life Chances of Young People in Scotland progress report which was published by Scottish Government in December. The Commission felt there was a lack of information on outcomes and impact and that this was an omission which they would like to see addressed. The Commission agreed that it would not scrutinise the report at this time but would write to the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government to emphasise the importance of data, outcomes and impact in measuring progress. The draft letter will be brought to the next Commission meeting on the 30 January. The Commission will look at these issues when it publishes its annual scrutiny report in late summer.

5. Proposal for a Working Group on Free School Meals

Lindsay Graham gave an update on the working group being proposed on free school meals and outlined the proposal. The working group's remit is to identify recommendations relating to free school meals policy and provision and how this can help reduce poverty or mitigate against the impacts of poverty in Scotland. The Commission agreed it was happy to set up the working group, and Commissioners suggested some additional members who could be invited to join the group. The working group will publish a final report at the end of June 2020.

6. Research update

Katherine Myant updated the Commission on the two pieces of research work being undertaken. A contract has been awarded to the Poverty Alliance and the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit to develop guidance on how best to involve people with direct lived experience of poverty. The guidance will be co-produced with people with lived experience. The guidance will be presented to the Commission by the end of May 2020. The other piece of research work that is out to tender is a literature/evidence review on intersectional inequalities. This will look at what is known about intersectional inequalities in Scotland, and what data and evidence is available in Scotland to support the Commission in taking an intersectional approach to poverty and inequality. The closing date for tenders is 16 January 2020.

7. Update from meetings: Benefit take up, Scottish Child Payment & Destitution in Glasgow

Bill Scott updated the Commission on the meeting he attended with the Convenor of the Scottish Parliament Social Security Committee. The Committee has been undertaking an inquiry on benefit take up and will publish its report in the spring. Bill Scott agreed with the Convenor that the Commission would try to time the work that it is planning to do on pension credit take up to align with the timing of Committee's report.. Morag Treanor gave an update on the meeting she attended to discuss the Scottish Child Payment regulations, which was organised by the Scottish Commission on Social Security. Bill Scott noted that he had met with Social Bite to discuss destitution in Glasgow, and a follow up meeting has been arranged with the Glasgow Night Shelter in January 2020.

8. Appointment of Deputy Chair

Commissioners were invited to express interest in becoming the Deputy Chair of the Commission. Morag Treanor and Lindsay Graham both expressed an interest and it was agreed that they would undertake the role consecutively, with each undertaking the role for a period of 15 months (subject to confirmation by the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government).

9. Update paper – Finance and Risk Register

The Risk Register and update on the budget paper were discussed by the Commission. The secretariat will provide the Commissioners with a paper at each meeting detailing the latest risk assessment and the forecast budget spend.

10. Any other business

- The next meeting will be on the 30 January in Glasgow.
- Feedback form for Commission meetings to be circulated to Commissioners.

Afternoon session – 1 pm – 3 pm

Discussion: How can Scottish tax powers be used to reduce poverty and inequality?

The Commission held an exploratory session with experts to discuss - How can Scottish tax powers be used to reduce poverty and inequality? The session will help to develop the Commission's strategic plan and future work plan. The Commission will have further expert discussions over the next few months.