

Meeting of the Poverty and Inequality Commission

Thursday 24 November 2022

10:00 – 12:00

Virtual meeting - Microsoft Teams

Commission attendees

Alex Cobham

Bill Scott, Chair

Linda Bamford

Katie Schmuecker

Professor Morag Treanor

Yvonne Blake

Shona Stephen

Other Attendees

Three Experts by Experience Panel members (**items 4, 5 & 6**)

External Attendees – Scottish Government (item 5)

Shona Robison, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government

John Clements, Deputy Private Secretary

Anne McKenzie, Unit Head, Tackling Child Poverty Policy Unit

Elaine Moir, Unit Head, Financial Wellbeing Unit

Secretariat attendees

Katherine Hudson, Secretariat Manager

Rory Morrison, Analytical Manager

Munwar Hussain, Senior Participation Officer

Apologies

Lindsay Graham

1. Welcome and apologies

Bill Scott welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were given for Lindsay Graham.

2. UK Government Autumn Budget Statement

Commissioners discussed the benefit uprating announcements in the Autumn Budget Statement. They also raised the challenges facing people for the upcoming winter period and the difficult outlook that is faced. The importance of the Scottish Government planning for both short-term and long term-support was also raised due to the immediate difficulties that people are facing and the longer-term effect on reductions in public spending that will start to come into effect a few years from now.

Commissioners raised questions as to whether impact assessments will be carried out in relation to the effect that the announcements could have on child poverty targets within Scotland.

3. Any other Business

BBC Scotland

Munwar Hussain shared information with the Commission about a planned feature by BBC Scotland on the Experts by Experience Panel.

Cost of Living Visits

Katherine Hudson shared information with the Commission about the approach to the next series of cost of living visits, following agreement at the last Commission meeting. The visits will be themed on advice services, and the secretariat are targeting areas that the Commission has not been to so far geographically. Commissioners were asked to feed back to the secretariat any particular areas that they would like to visit either virtually or in person by the end of November.

Food Infant Insecurity

In Lindsay Graham's absence, Rory Morrison updated the Commission as to work proposed in conjunction with the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland on infant food insecurity, following a presentation by Professor Flora Douglas of Robert Gordon University and colleagues to Commissioners and CYPs in October 2022.

4. Commissioners and Experts by Experience Panel Members Emergency Budget Discussion

Bill Scott led a discussion with Commissioners and Experts by Experience panel members in advance of the discussion with the Cabinet Secretary.

5. Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government joined the meeting. The Cabinet Secretary shared her reflections with Commissioners on the emergency budget review and noted that it had required reprioritisation and difficult choices. She thanked the Commission and Experts by Experience Panel members for their advice and briefing.

The Cabinet Secretary discussed with the Commission the implications of the UK autumn statement on the ability of the Scottish Government to meet its child poverty targets.

The Cabinet Secretary and the Commission also discussed free school meals eligibility, public sector debt arrears, educational maintenance allowance and concessionary travel. The Cabinet Secretary asked her officials to follow up with the

Commission on several specific questions, including the extension of concessionary travel support to people seeking asylum and those on low incomes.

Scottish Government External attendees left the meeting

6. Scottish Government Emergency Budget Review follow-up discussion

The Commission and Experts by Experience Panel members discussed key actions that they would like to follow up with Scottish Government. The secretariat will arrange a follow up meeting with officials from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) around public sector debt and arrears.