



Poverty and Inequality Commission Annual Report 2022-2023

Contents

Foreword from Chair	3
1. About us	5
2. Our Vision, Mission and Principles	6
3. Our Strategic Priorities.....	7
4. Our work between April 2022 and March 2023	9
5. Financial Summary	20
6. Our Work Programme for 2022-2023	21
7. Membership of the Commission.....	22

Foreword from Chair

The last year has been one where the cost of living crisis has placed a strain on



many households across Scotland. Rising fuel and food prices have affected everyone, but for households on the lowest incomes, with the least scope to reduce their costs, this has heightened the difficulties and stresses that they face. Coming on top of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the last few years have been relentless for many low income households.

It was inevitable that a substantial amount of the Commission's work in the last year has focused on the cost of living. In May 2022 we received a request from Scottish Government for advice on what actions could be taken in the short, medium and long term to support those most at risk

due to the cost of living crisis. We published that advice in September 2022. We also visited community and frontline organisations across Scotland to find out about the impact of the cost of living crisis on them and the communities that they serve. These visits were invaluable for us. We saw great examples of important work supporting local communities and heard from the people doing that work about their successes, but also about the challenges they faced. We published a briefing in October 2022 setting out some of the messages that we heard and will publish another briefing reflecting on more of our visits.

While we have sought to understand and respond to the impacts of the immediate crisis, the Commission has also kept focused on the longer term actions that are needed to tackle poverty and inequality in Scotland. Despite the difficult context, there has been positive news during the year, with the increase and expansion of the Scottish Child Payment which is now £25 per week for eligible children under the age of 16. This is making a real difference to children and families across Scotland. We undertook our annual scrutiny of the progress towards meeting the child targets and provided recommendations to Scottish Government on what more is needed to tackle child poverty. We have also established a tax working group to look at how devolved taxation could better address poverty and inequality in Scotland.

Throughout the year the contribution of our Experts by Experience Panel has been invaluable. The Panel has had an increasing role in shaping the Commission's work and priorities and both the Panel and the Commission have continued to reflect on and take action to strengthen how we work in partnership. We are on a continuing journey towards truly sharing power and co-producing our advice and recommendations. The current Panel will finish its work later this summer and we will

be establishing a new Panel in the autumn, building on the learning from our first Panel.

I am very grateful to the many organisations and individuals who have enhanced the Commission's work over the last year by sharing their knowledge, experience, insight and challenge. I would particularly like to thank the organisations who hosted visits with Commissioners and were generous with their time and honest in telling us about what was working and what needs to change. I look forward to continuing to work with all our partners over the coming year on our shared aim to tackle poverty and inequality across Scotland.

Bill Scott
Chair, Poverty and Inequality Commission

1. About us

The Poverty and Inequality Commission was established on 1 July 2019. It is an advisory non-departmental public body which provides independent advice and scrutiny to Scottish Ministers on poverty and inequality.

The Commission's role is to:

- Advise Scottish Ministers on any matter relating to poverty or inequality in Scotland, including the impact of policies and the use of resources in reducing poverty and inequality
- Monitor progress in reducing poverty and inequality in Scotland
- Promote the reduction of poverty and inequality in Scotland

We sometimes call these three different types of work that we do advice, scrutiny and advocacy.

The Commission has specific responsibilities in relation to child poverty where it:

- Provides advice to Ministers on Child Poverty Delivery Plans
- Comments on annual progress towards the targets and what further progress is needed to meet the targets.

The Commission responds to requests for advice from Scottish Ministers, but also develops its own work programme to scrutinise progress and to promote the importance of particular issues in reducing poverty and inequality.

In order to do its work the Commission can gather evidence, carry out research, and publish reports.

2. Our Vision, Mission and Principles

Our Vision

The Commission wants to see a Scotland where no-one lives in poverty, or is diminished by inequality, and everyone is able to live with dignity and thrive.

Our Mission

We will work to strengthen policy, legislation, and practice to reduce poverty and inequality in Scotland, by engaging with experts by experience, advising Scottish Ministers, scrutinising progress, and advocating for action.

Our Principles

The following principles set out how we will work as a Commission. We will be:

Courageous and honest

- Say what is right, not what is easy
- Drive progress and change by providing constructive challenge

Evidence-based

- Use evidence, from statistics and from people's testimony, to inform, scrutinise and monitor progress

Listening and accessible

- Be visible, accessible and available
- Listen to those who wish to be heard, especially those with expertise and direct lived experience of poverty and inequality

Promoting dignity and respect

- Tackle the stigma and discrimination associated with poverty

Vocal

- Speak up for and amplify the voices of people who are not often heard

Person-centred

- Keep people, their lives, their potential, and their individuality at the centre of what we do

3. Our Strategic Priorities

Scotland's [National Performance Framework](#) sets out 11 National Outcomes and indicators by which they are measured, a Purpose, and Values that together reflect the Scotland that we want to see. The Commission, as with national and local government, voluntary organisations and the private sector across Scotland, contributes to the Outcomes in the framework.

In our [Strategic Plan](#) we have identified one overarching priority and four strategic priorities that are guiding the Commission's work in the period up to the end of 2023. Our strategic priorities contribute to realising the National Outcome on [Poverty](#) ("we tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally"). Each of these priorities is inter-related. Our overarching priority is to amplify the voices of experts by experience – people with lived experience of poverty and inequality – and this should be seen as central to all the strategic priorities.



In this Annual Report we set out the actions we have taken to deliver on our strategic priorities in order to contribute to realising the National Outcome on Poverty. Our advice to, and scrutiny of, the Scottish Government on policies related to poverty and inequality helps create the conditions for effective action to be taken on poverty. Within the Commission itself over the last two years, we have made a conscious effort to share the formal powers that the Commission has with people who have lived experience of poverty through our Experts by Experience Panel. The advice and scrutiny the Commission provides also has strong connections to the [Children](#)

[and Young People](#), [Human Rights](#), and [Communities](#) National Outcomes, among others.

In addition to what we do, the National Performance Framework sets out how we should do it in its statement of Values. Our own values on the previous page align well with those in the National Performance Framework. Specifically, the Commissioners, our secretariat, and our Experts by Experience Panel members seek to ensure all the work we do involves treating people with kindness, dignity and compassion.

4. Our work between April 2022 and March 2023

Our Annual Report looks back at the work the Commission has carried out in the last 12 months. During 2022-23 the cost of living crisis has been a significant focus for the Commission.

In addition to the Commission's planned visits to community organisations and groups to hear about the impact of the cost of living on local communities and services, in May 2022, the Commission was asked by the then Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government to provide advice on actions that the Scottish Government could take to support those most at risk with the cost of living crisis.

Other priority areas of work over the last year have been the Commission's ongoing scrutiny of progress towards meeting the child poverty targets, and its work on tax.

Throughout the year, the Commission's Panel of Experts by Experience has helped to shape and support our work in developing and providing advice, scrutiny and advocacy on poverty and inequality in Scotland over the last year.

The Annual Report sets out the Poverty and Inequality Commission's work and how it aligns with the Commission's strategic priorities.

Overarching priority:

Amplify the voices of experts by experience to make sure they are part of identifying issues, developing and designing solutions, and scrutinising progress.

A particular focus for the Commission over the last year has been on developing the role of our Experts by Experience Panel, and how the Panel and Commission work together, and developing opportunities for Panel members to speak directly to Scottish Government ministers and officials.

Over the period 2022-23 our Panel of Experts by Experience has worked closely with the Commission, on issues relating to poverty and inequality and helped inform and influence Commission decision-making using their knowledge and expertise as people with lived experience.

The Panel, as well as meeting regularly in online and hybrid Panel meetings, has also taken part in additional activities. This includes meeting with decision makers and policy makers, attending Commission meetings, writing guest blogs, speaking to delegates at conferences and submissions to a range of bodies as part of multiple working groups.

Below is an example of the range of work that was carried out by the Panel during this period.

- The Experts by Experience Panel identified its own priorities for focus, which included disability assistance, fuel poverty, carer poverty and rural poverty and took forward work on these.
- Jointly with Commissioners, Panel members have met with Scottish Government leads to review progress in 2022-2023 against the [Child Poverty Delivery Plan](#) and the below commitments.

Parental Employability
Parental Transition Fund
Affordable Housing Supply Programme
Early Learning and Childcare
School Age Childcare
Child Poverty Pathfinders
Social Innovation Partnership

This work has shaped the Commission's 2022-2023 [child poverty scrutiny report](#).

- Panel members have also presented to other members on topics they have experience of such as Carer Poverty, the Social Model of Disability, Employability and people seeking asylum and Poverty.

- The Panel was also in a feature across BBC Scotland, Online, Radio and TV, with an [online article](#) focusing on two members of the Panel.
- The Panel has submitted responses to consultations from a number of bodies including the Scottish Government, a UK Parliamentary Committee and the Scottish Commission on Social Security.
- Panel members also participated in Challenge Poverty Week, have written blogs, presented at the Scottish Leaders Forum and take part in social media activity.
- An example of the range of work that the Panel have contributed to in different ways includes

Responding to a consultation on the Cost of Living Impact on Rural Communities

Speaking to the Scottish Fuel Poverty Advisory Panel advice

Providing feedback on the Scottish Government's Cost of Living

Website after it went live

Responding to the Scottish Government's consultation on its draft Rented Sector Strategy

Contributing to the Commission's consultation response on the Scottish Government's Equality Evidence Strategy

Contributing to the Scottish National Action Plan for Human Rights (Phase 2)

- The Panel also met with the then Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government Shona Robison as part of Commission meetings to outline the impact of the Cost of Living crisis.

As part of a review of the first year of the Panel, the Cabinet Secretary provided the Commission with some feedback on what Panel members brought to her engagements with the Commission:

Hearing first-hand from the Panel members has been invaluable. Their voices paint a powerful picture of the reality they face every day. I particularly appreciate how open, frank and honest the Panel members have been during our discussions about what is or is not working for them, the challenges they face, often on a day to day basis, and what more we as a government can do to make things better for people

Shona Robison MSP (Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government, up until March 2023)

The current Panel, made up of 16 members, comes to an end in June 2023, with a new Panel starting in Autumn 2023. We have been working with current Panel members to support their interest in other opportunities for public involvement and participation, including Public Appointments. This includes developing a shadowing scheme for interested members with the Commission, called 'Getting Inside...'

We asked members of our Panel about their experiences of being Panel members.

Being a panel member has allowed me to share my own personal experiences of what it is like to live in poverty in Scotland but more importantly it has allowed me to hear from many others from a diverse background. We have shared some of our most personal stories and we have a connection now. I will miss meeting up with everyone every month and it makes me sad that this process is over. More than this, we have helped influence change and put pressure on the decision makers to make the right choices.

Poverty and inequality is a vast and complex area. The best way of tackling this, is for the government to ask questions and take positive action on the responses.

People with Lived experience of poverty should be consulted by Scottish Government officials in policy development and implementation.

Being a panel member has been a genuine opportunity to bring about social change in Scotland.

Lived experience voices are invaluable and need to be at the core of any policy making and scrutiny. This panel has enabled that and others can learn so much from it!

Strategic Priority 1:

Ensure that reducing poverty and inequality is central to policy making and delivery in Scotland.

Over the last year, the cost of living crisis has caused poverty and inequality to be considered as a central factor in decisions about policy and funding in Scotland and indeed the whole of the United Kingdom. A substantial amount of the Commission's work has been focused on providing advice to Scottish Government on responding to the cost of living crisis, while we have also been visiting frontline organisations and community groups to see the impact on the ground. It has still been important to look beyond the immediate crisis and the Commission has also prioritised its work to scrutinise progress in tackling child poverty.

Commission Cost of Living Advice to Scottish Government

In May 2022, in the light of the growing cost of living crisis, the Commission was asked by the then Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government to provide advice on actions that the Scottish Government could take in the short, medium and long term to support those most at risk because of the cost of living crisis.

While most of the powers to act on the cost of living crisis lie with the UK Government, the Scottish Government has an important role in supporting households in Scotland. The Commission provided its initial advice to the Scottish Government in June 2022, followed by further advice in August 2022.

The initial advice focused on action that the Scottish Government could take in the short term to quickly provide support to households that were missing out on existing UK Government support with the cost of living, or receiving insufficient support for the costs they face. The final advice looked at medium to longer term options that could support households through the winter and beyond.

Commission Cost of Living Briefing

Throughout the year the Commission and members of our Experts by Experience Panel visited twenty community based and grassroot organisations to hear from them about how the cost of living was impacting on them and the communities they work with. Some of the organisations that we met with were food banks, family support agencies and social empowerment organisations from across Scotland. The Commission published a briefing and blog based on the messages that we heard on our visits to community organisations between June and August 2022, and from discussions with the Commission's Experts by Experience Panel.

Key messages from our Cost of Living visits

- **Demand for services was rising:** Organisations we spoke to described an increase in demand for their services, in response to the cost of living crisis and the ongoing impact of the pandemic.

- **Household Daily Costs:** Household costs for energy, food, transport and household debt were a huge concern for organisations, with households they support struggling to pay energy bills and buy food.
- **Debt:** Public debt and particularly Council Tax debt, was an issue highlighted by some organisations. They spoke of a need to reform council tax debt recovery and to begin treating people with dignity and respect when pursuing arrears.
- **Transport costs:** Rising petrol costs were highlighted by many organisations, particularly those based in rural areas. This was impacting on the ability of some people to stay in work where they needed to commute to get employment or even to travel to pick up supplies from food banks. Transport costs were also having an impact on the ability of people to volunteer in community-based organisations and services.
- **Mental Health:** We saw that the cost of living crisis was clearly becoming a mental health crisis. A number of organisations highlighted the impact of first the pandemic, and now the cost of living crisis, on mental health.
- **Other issues:** some other specific issues highlighted by organisations included digital poverty, which can affect people's ability to access benefits and support services, access to infant formula, support for families with No Recourse to Public Funds, and difficulties for organisations in accessing food.

The Commission continued its cost of living visits throughout 2022-23 and will publish a further briefing in summer 2023.

Child Poverty Scrutiny Report 2021-22

In June 2022 we published our [Child Poverty Scrutiny Report 2021-22](#). The report set out the Commission's comments on Scottish Government's progress towards meeting the child poverty targets. It was prepared for the Scottish Government in May 2022, in order to [inform Scottish Government's progress report](#). The report drew on the work done by the Commission's Experts by Experience Panel, and work with children and young people, carried out in partnership with the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland (CYPCS) and Aberlour, to think about progress in reducing child poverty so far.

The reports found that the action taken so far was very unlikely to be enough to meet the 2030 child poverty targets, but that the commitments made in the 2022-2026 Child Poverty Delivery Plan should help the Scottish Government make progress. Further action was needed to deliver the kinds of the transformative policies that will be required in order to meet the 2030 targets.

Consultation responses

Over the course of 2022-2023 the Commission and Experts by Experience Panel also contributed to a number of consultations published by the Scottish Government,

the Scottish Commission on Social Security and the UK Parliament's Scottish Affairs Committee. These included:

- [Cost of Living Impact on Rural Communities](#)
- [Draft Rented Sector Strategy](#)
- [Scottish Child Payment and Best Start regulations](#)
- [Low Income Winter Heating Assistance regulations](#)

Strategic Priority 2:

Increase the impact of policies to reduce poverty and inequality by promoting better use of evidence in developing policies and measuring impact.

The Commission considers this strategic priority in all its work by drawing on existing evidence when developing its advice, and addressing the need for better use of evidence in its scrutiny work. In addition we have undertaken the following three pieces of work over the last year to support the development of the evidence base.

Understanding The Impact of Covid-19 On Young People Across The UK An Evidence Synthesis

Between October 2021 and March 2022 the Poverty and Inequality Commission and the [Social Mobility Commission](#) commissioned this rapid evidence review from [Learning and Work Institute](#) on the impact of Covid-19 on young people from low socioeconomic backgrounds or at risk of poor social mobility. This report, analysis and findings were developed in collaboration with the Social Mobility Commission under the co-chairship of Sandra Wallace and Steven Cooper in 2021.

The [final report](#) was published in March 2023.

Consultation on the Scottish Government Equality Evidence Strategy

The Commission responded to the Scottish Government's [consultation on its Equality Evidence Strategy](#). Our [response](#) highlighted the importance of involving people with lived experience of the policies that affect them, the need to draw out insights across the totality of evidence that is collected and published by the Scottish Government (rather than being restricted to compartmental organisational structures) and the importance of being explicit in taking an intersectional approach. The final version of the [Strategy published in March 2023](#) was changed following this consultation to include intersectionality in its vision statement.

Developing an intersectional analysis strategy

The Commission started to take forward work to develop a strategy for embedding intersectional analysis across the Commission's work. We commissioned Talat Yaqoob to carry out training for the Commission and members of the Experts by Experience Panel, and to undertake a review of some of the Commission's previous work to look at the challenges and opportunities for developing an intersectional approach to its work. This work will be completed in 2023.

Strategic Priority 3:

Advocate for a response to COVID-19 that addresses the structural causes of poverty and inequality.

While there has been an focus over the last year on immediate responses to the cost of living crisis, the Commission has continued to advocate for action that addresses the structural causes of poverty and inequality. Our work has including establishing a tax working group to consider the role that taxation can play in addressing poverty and inequality, contributing to Scotland's National Human Rights Action Plan, and participating in the Scottish Government's Minimum Income Guarantee Steering Group.

Tax Working Group

In November 2022 the Commission established [a tax working group](#) to look in more detail at how devolved taxation could better address poverty and inequality in Scotland.

The working group is made up of three Commissioners, two Panel members and two external experts. It has been hearing evidence from a range of organisations and individuals who have an interest in devolved taxation in Scotland.

The group is focussing its work around a series of questions:

- To what extent are current arrangements for taxation in Scotland progressive?
- How could existing taxes be made more progressive in order to reduce poverty and inequality?
- What opportunities are there to raise additional revenue through existing or new taxation in order to reduce poverty and inequality?
- How can the representation aspect of taxation be promoted and understood, as a way of reducing inequality?

The group will work through till the summer of 2023 to provide recommendations on taxation to the wider Commission.

Contribution Scotland's National Human Rights Action Plan

[Scotland's second National Human Rights Action Plan](#) was published in March 2023. The Commission and our Experts by Experience Panel members contributed to actions it contains on achieving a decent standard of living and towards defining the Medium Terms Outcomes, particularly Outcome Three; More rights holders are fully and meaningfully involved in informing, shaping, implementing and/or monitoring a rights based approach in a range of context.

Participation in Scottish Government Minimum Income Guarantee Steering Group

The Commission Chair has represented the Commission on the Scottish Government's Minimum Income Guarantee Steering Group during 2022-2023. The Steering Group aims to define a minimum income guarantee for Scotland, and to identify and prioritise action for further development and testing during the course of this Parliament to support the delivery of a minimum income guarantee within current devolved powers. The group published its [interim report](#) in March 2023.

Strategic Priority 4:

Establish the Commission as an authoritative voice, and support a conversation that promotes dignity, challenges stigma, encourages action, and changes the narrative about poverty and inequality in Scotland.

In 2022-2023 the Commission undertook a range of activity to highlight issues of poverty and inequality and encourage discussion about how to address poverty and inequality in Scotland. This included speaking at events and meetings, giving evidence to the Scottish Parliament and engaging with the media.

Social Justice and Social Security Committee's pre-budget scrutiny

The Social Justice and Social Security Committee invited the Commission to provide evidence about socio-economic inequality as part of its pre-budget considerations. Professor Morag Treanor, Deputy Chair, gave evidence at the Social Justice and Social Security Committee's pre-budget scrutiny session in September 2022.

Public Audit Committee

Bill Scott, Chair was invited to the Public Audit Committee in November 2022. The principal purpose of the meeting was a round table to take evidence on the Accounts Commission's and Auditor General's briefing "[Tackling child poverty](#)", which Audit Scotland published in September 2022.

Events, meetings and media activity

Over the last year members of the Commission met regularly with the then Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government to discuss poverty and inequality issues. Our Commissioners have spoken at a range of events and in the media. Our Chair and Experts by Experience Panel members spoke to [BBC News](#) about how they and their fellow Panel members have used their experiences to influence policy on poverty.

Commissioners presented and attended various events over the course of the year, including:

- Best Start, Bright Futures Roundtable
- Poverty Alliance Board Meeting
- Public Health Scotland – UK Summit on Poverty and Public Health
- ASSIST Autumn Seminar
- Scottish Government Food Retail Summit
- Cost of Living Emergency Food Summit
- Ensuring our children's future 2023 and beyond tackling the crisis in Public Health
- Concept Seminar – 'Speak up! Speak Out! Communities and the Cost of Living Crisis

5. Financial Summary

The Poverty and Inequality Commission was allocated a budget of £335,831 by the Scottish Government for 2022-2023. The Commission's budget is held by the Scottish Government and the Commission is not required to produce audited accounts.

The table below provides a summary of the money that was spent on behalf of the Commission between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023.

The Commission reported a budget underspend this year. This was partly due to Commission meetings and events being held online which reduced costs. A delay in being able to undertake research work resulted in less of the budget being spent on this. The underspend was returned to Scottish Government.

Budget – April 2022 to March 2023	£335,831
Staff costs	£239,643
Commissioner fees & travel expenses	£30,332
Commission meetings and events (including support with costs for people to attend)	£779
Research	£9,900
Communications & IT	£8,924
Administration, training and other costs	£1,776
Experts by Experience Panel	£15,310
Total	£306,664

6. Our Work Programme for 2022-2023

Our work programme for next year currently includes three main areas: child poverty, tax and developing the next phase of our Experts by Experience Panel. Alongside these key pieces of work we will publish a further cost of living briefing and our strategy for embedding intersectional analysis across the Commission's work.

Child Poverty

The Commission will continue to scrutinise progress towards meeting the child poverty targets. The Commission scrutinises the Scottish Government's progress towards the child poverty targets on an annual basis as part of its statutory responsibilities.

Tax working group

The Commission's tax working group will make recommendations to the Commission over the summer and the Commission will publish its report in late summer 2023.

Experts by Experience Panel

The current Experts by Experience panel phase ends in June 2023. The Commission plans to publish a learning report during summer 2023. The next phase of the Panel will build on this learning and recruitment of new Panel members will happen in autumn 2023, with preparation over the summer.

7. Membership of the Commission

There are nine members of the Commission who were all appointed through a public appointments process. They are:

Bill Scott (Chair)

Bill is Senior Policy Advisor at Inclusion Scotland and serves on a number of Scottish Government Social Security/Welfare Reform reference and scrutiny groups.

Lindsay Graham (Deputy Chair)

Lindsay is an independent policy advisor with a particular interest in tackling food insecurity.

Morag Treanor (Deputy Chair)

Morag is Professor of Child and Family Inequalities at the University of Glasgow and a member of the Advisory Board for the Child Poverty Action Group.

Linda Bamford

Linda is Convenor of the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland and previously worked for NHS Scotland.

Yvonne Blake

Yvonne is an anti-poverty campaigner, co-founder of Roots to Return and of Migrants Organising for Rights and Empowerment, and a member of the Unity Centre.

Alex Cobham

Alex is Chief Executive of the Tax Justice Network.

Katie Schmuecker

Katie is Principal Policy Adviser at the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Shona Stephen

Shona is Chief Executive of Queens Cross Housing Association.

Douglas White (resigned September 2022)

At the time of his membership of the Commission, Douglas was a Director at the Carnegie UK Trust.