**Experts by Experience Panel Terms of Reference**

**Introduction**

The current Poverty and Inequality Commission was set up through the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 and started on the 1st of July 2019. It is an independent public body that was set up to tell Scottish Ministers what is working for people affected by poverty, what isn’t working, and how things could be done differently to reduce poverty and inequality in Scotland.

This document sets out Terms of Reference for the Poverty and Inequality Commission’s Experts by Experience Panel.

**Background**

The Poverty and Inequality Commission believes that people with experience of poverty – experts by experience – should be at the centre of decision-making about poverty and inequality.

To make sure decisions taken by the Commission are shaped and supported by experts by experience, the Commission has set up and will work with a Panel of experts by experience from across Scotland.

**Terms of Reference**

**Purpose**

The Commission’s Strategic Plan 2020-2023 is a document that sets out what work the Commission will be focusing on until 2023. This document includes an overarching priority. That means something that is very important to the Commission and that cuts across all of the Commission’s work. This overarching priority is to ‘Amplify the voices of experts by experience to make sure they are part of identifying issues, developing and designing solutions, and scrutinising progress.’

The Experts by Experience Panel will work with the Commission, making sure people with experience of poverty support and shape the work of the Commission in reducing poverty and inequality in Scotland.

**Membership**

The Experts by Experience Panel is a group of people from across Scotland who have lived experience of poverty and inequality. The Panel will comprise 15 - 20 people from across Scotland at any one time, and its members will be drawn from the diversity of Scotland’s communities, ensuring membership of people:

- with different experiences;
- from different groups (for example, parents/carers);
- with different characteristics (for example, people of different nationalities, disabled people, people of different genders); and
- from different geographical areas.

**The Panel’s Role**

* To tell the Commission about issues relating to poverty and inequality that they feel are important; the Commission can also bring important issues to the Panel.
* To inform and influence the Commission’s decisions and activities using their knowledge and expertise as people with lived experience of poverty and inequality.
* To help make sure that the experiences of people and communities are effectively communicated and understood by Commissioners, with the support of the Secretariat.
* To take part in meetings, workshops and discussions about poverty and inequality
* Prepare for meetings and do some activities at home.

**The Commission’s Role**

The Commission will work with the Panel:

* To find the best ways of the Commission and Panel working together
* To make sure that the Commission’s work programme includes things that the Panel thinks are important
* To provide evidence and briefings to the Panel on issues relating to poverty and inequality where necessary
* To draft written statements and reports that articulate the Panel’s views
* To give the Panel opportunities to share experiences and ideas directly with Scottish Government, and the chance to influence decisions that the Scottish Government is taking
* To give the Panel opportunities to decide other actions that it might want to take
* Provide opportunities for Panel members to socialise or to get to know each other, where this is something they want to do

To ensure the Panel is supported in its role, the Commission will:

* Organise and run meetings whether virtual, face-to-face or a mix (hybrid) of both
* Provide practical support with travel and paying expenses in line with the Commission’s policy
* Provide vouchers after meetings and activities to thank people for their time
* Prepare and facilitate meetings and activities in a way that supports people to take part and
* Arrange and offer training and learning opportunities to support Panel members in their role

It is the aim of the Commission to work together with the Panel to provide the best advice on actions to reduce poverty and inequality in Scotland. However, the Commission has specific duties under the Child Poverty Act, meaning it has the legal responsibility of providing advice and scrutiny to Scottish Ministers. Whilst the Panel will inform and support the work of the Commission, there may be times that the views of the Commission differ to those of the Panel. If or where the advice the Commission provides is different to the views of the Panel, the Commission will discuss with the Panel and will explain why this is the case.

**Ways of Working**

To fulfil its role, the Panel will meet around once per month on average. There will also be more frequent meetings to discuss urgent or complex issues. Meetings will be a mix of virtual, face-to face and hybrid participation. If and when, depending on the COVID-19 pandemic, meetings can take place in person, they will be held in accessible venues in Scotland.

At present, Panel members meet on a voluntary basis with all expenses related to travel, accommodation, caring or childcare covered by the Commission. Panel members also receive thank you vouchers from the Commission for their participation.

The Panel’s Group Agreement will outline the things that will make sure people feel safe and supported to take part in the activities of the Panel. The Panel is a new area of the Commission’s participation work. We welcome discussions with Panel Members at any time on the Commission’s approach to participation.

The Commission will acknowledge and publish relevant information about the Panel and its work on its website and social media.

**Complaints**

The Poverty and Inequality Commission is committed to delivering the highest standards of practice. We value complaints and will use information from them to help us to improve how we work.

In the first instance, and if you feel comfortable doing so, please let the Participation Officer know if there is anything you are not happy with.

If you are unhappy with anything we have or have not done, but do not want to raise an issue with the Participation Officer you can make a complaint in the following ways:

In writing to: The Poverty and Inequality Commission, 7th floor Atlantic Quay, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow, G2 8LU

By email to:info@povertyinequality.scot – writing ‘Complaint’ in the subject line.

The Commission is currently reviewing its complaints process and procedure to ensure it is fit for purpose and will update Panel members, and this document, when this has happened.