

# **Poverty and Inequality Commission Intersectionality strategy**

## **1. Introduction**

The Poverty and Inequality Commission recognises that taking an intersectional approach is critical in tackling poverty and inequality in Scotland. Many of those who are most likely to be in deepest poverty will experience overlapping discrimination and intersecting inequalities. We know that those experiencing intersections of ableism, racism and sexism are particularly at risk of poverty.

If we try to tackle poverty and inequality without recognising and addressing the impact of intersecting inequalities we may further marginalise those who experience them and fail to take the action that is needed for those who experience the deepest poverty. On the other hand, if we try to understand and respond to the experiences and needs of those who experience intersecting inequalities and are most marginalised, we are more likely to be able to design policies and actions that meet the needs of everyone who experiences poverty.

The Commission is committed to working towards taking an intersectional approach to developing its advice and scrutiny. We recognise there are challenges in doing this in practice, in particular the limited intersectional data that is available, but are committed to taking action to work towards such an approach.

We will also be clear through our advice and scrutiny that the Scottish Government, local authorities and other partners must also work towards taking an intersectional approach in understanding and taking action to tackle poverty. This includes research, policy-making and implementation.

## **2. What we aim to do**

We recognise that a commitment to taking an intersectional approach will require culture change for the Commission. In committing to working towards an intersectional approach our general principles are that we will:

- Ask ourselves questions as we start to develop each piece of work about what an intersectional approach would look like (the guide for discussion in the annex is intended to support this), and document the decisions we make
- Rather than talking about intersectionality in general terms, instead ask ourselves specific questions about which intersections are most relevant to the work in question, and name not only the group/community being referred to but also the discrimination/oppression which causes the inequality (e.g. sexism/ableism/racism)
- Explicitly take an intersectional approach to our lived experience work, continuing to work towards redistributing power, building capacity and ensuring experts by experience feel safe and able to bring their experiences of compounding inequalities into their work as panel members
- Reflect on the sources of evidence we use and look to identify wider sources of evidence, such as civic society and community research, to develop a fuller evidence base that better reflects the lived experience of multiple-marginalised groups
- Raise expectations that Scottish Government and others undertake intersectional analysis and use this in developing policies and services

Below we set out what this means for some of the different aspects of the Commission's work.

## **2.1 Identifying strategic priorities and work programme**

In considering its strategic and work priorities, the Commission will consider to what extent its choice of particular priorities is being informed by evidence (or lack of evidence) relating to intersecting inequalities, and to what extent the work will allow the Commission to contribute to the evidence base or make recommendations that take account of intersecting inequalities.

## **2.2 Work with experts by experience**

The Commission aims to amplify the voices of experts by experience to make sure they are part of identifying issues, developing and designing solutions and scrutinising progress. In establishing our first experts by experience panel we have

been working towards sharing power and co-producing our advice and scrutiny. Panel members have taken part in training and discussions about intersectionality.

In establishing our next experts by experience panel and extending our engagement with experts by experience we will explicitly take an intersectional approach and continue to work towards redistributing power. We will identify key community-based organisations that represent or engage individuals with specific overlapping inequalities and work with them to invite applications for our new panel. We will work to ensure that that membership of the panel over-represents people who experience multiple marginalisations. We will continue to build the capacity of the panel, through training and skills-building on intersectionality to try to create a space where panel members are supported to feel able and safe to share their experiences of compounding inequalities, and able to consider what this means for taking action to tackle poverty.

Beyond the panel, we will look to engage with these community-based organisations to create more accessible and relevant ways for them to engage with the Commission.

## **2.3 Developing work and making recommendations**

When the Commission is developing a new piece of work the Commission and secretariat will consider what specific intersecting inequalities are most relevant to this piece of work and whether the questions we are asking and the methods that we are proposing enable us to increase our understanding of these intersections.

In making recommendations we will check that our recommendations don't assume a homogenous experience for all people living in poverty and will highlight any gaps in our understanding in relation to intersecting inequalities.

## **2.4 Research and analysis**

There is limited data available which looks at poverty in relation to the intersection of characteristics such as race, disability and sex. This is generally because sample sizes, even in large scale surveys such as the Family Resources Survey in Scotland are typically not large enough to support robust intersectional analysis. The cost of

achieving sample sizes that are big enough to allow robust intersectional analysis on a range of characteristics may be prohibitive.

The Commission will continue its dialogue with Scottish Government about how to maximise the use of national-level poverty data for intersectional analysis, including the potential to boost sample sizes where feasible, or combine multiple years of data together.

The Commission will encourage the Scottish Government, local authorities and other partners to use other kinds of data, including community-led research, to give greater insights into experiences of intersecting inequalities.

When undertaking or commissioning new research or analysis, the Commission and secretariat will consider:

- Which specific intersections are relevant to the research or analysis?
- Does the proposed methodology allow us to gather evidence on those intersections?
- If not, should we look at different methodologies or identify alternative sources of evidence to supplement the planned work?

Where the Commission is commissioning research we will look to include research questions with an intersectional perspective.

The Commission most frequently draws on existing evidence to inform its analysis and recommendations. In doing that it will consider:

- Does this evidence tell us anything about intersecting inequalities?
- If not, can we identify alternative sources of evidence, such as community research, that we can use to supplement the evidence we are using to understand more?

Where we are not able to identify relevant evidence we will acknowledge the lack of evidence about intersecting inequalities in our work.

## **2.5 Child poverty scrutiny and advice**

The Scottish Government has identified six priority family types that have a higher than average risk of being in poverty. These are households with a disabled person, three or more children, a baby aged under 1, minority ethnic households, mothers

aged under 25, and lone parent families. The identification of these priority family types has informed the Scottish Government's analysis and policy development. The Commission has also used these priority family types to guide its analysis and development of recommendations. This has been an important step in starting to understand and focus policy attention on the needs of those families at highest risk of poverty, but it does not in itself deliver an intersectional approach as it does not go on to look at the overlap between these priority groups, for example by looking at the experiences of lone parents with a disabled child.

In future the Commission will include a 'standing question' in all its child poverty work which asks: 'what are the intersecting inequalities between these groups and are there systemic injustices which are being overlooked?'. We will explore what opportunities there are for further analysis of child poverty data to look at these intersecting inequalities and look at how we can supplement quantitative data with qualitative data and other forms of evidence to inform our analysis.

In developing future advice and recommendations we will continue to make use of family case studies to inform and test the Commission's analysis and recommendations to ensure that intersectional considerations are taken into account. We will widen this approach with more case studies and look to include explicit questions about intersectional considerations when using the case studies.

### **3. Accountability**

We will use the guide for discussion set out in the annex as a prompt to ensure that we work towards an intersectional approach. Commission papers setting out proposals for a new piece of work will include relevant questions that have been considered, and will highlight issues for discussion at the Commission meeting. The intention is not that this should be a one-off consideration of intersectionality for a project but that the guide will be referred back to at relevant stages of the work to make sure that we take an intersectional approach throughout. In the longer term we hope that using these tools will help embed the cultural change that is required to take an intersectional approach.

We will review the progress that we have made towards taking an intersectional approach on an annual basis and reflect this in our annual report.

## Annex: Guide for Commission discussion

This guide for Commission discussion sets out prompt questions that will be useful in making sure that we consider how to take an intersectional approach in different types of work and at different stages of our work.

Identifying strategic priorities and work programme	
Check-in question	What are our next steps or mitigations?
In considering potential priorities, have we worked to prevent a homogenous 'one size fits all' approach?	
Are we giving different intersections parity of esteem and trying to avoid focusing on some intersections more than others	
Is there evidence (or lack of evidence) relating to intersecting inequalities that can inform the decisions about priorities?	
Will focusing on a particular priority allow the Commission to contribute to the evidence base or make recommendations that take account of intersecting inequalities?	
Are appropriate Commission resources (funding, time and access to expertise) being allocated to enable an intersectional approach?	

Working with experts by experience	
Check-in question	What are our next steps or mitigations?
Are we working with organisations or groups working at a particular intersection (e.g. women of colour, disabled people of colour)?	
Have we considered the over-representation of people who experience	

multiple marginalisation, for both our panel and other engagement with people with lived experience of poverty?	
Has time been given to ensuring capacity building on intersectionality?	

<b>Developing a piece of work</b>	
<b>Check-in question</b>	<b>What are our next steps or mitigations?</b>
What specific intersecting inequalities are most relevant to this piece of work?	
Are we focusing on some intersections more than others? Have we been transparent about why?	
Will the questions we are asking and the methods we are proposing enable us to increase our understanding of these intersections? How will they do this?	
Are we aware of existing intersectional data or analysis that can support this work?	

<b>Carrying out and reviewing analysis and research</b>	
<b>Check-in question</b>	<b>What are our next steps or mitigations?</b>
Does analysis assume a 'homogenous' experience for all people living in poverty?	
Have relevant intersecting inequalities been clearly identified?	
Have research questions been identified that enable us to explore intersections?	

Have data gaps been identified which make taking an intersectional approach difficult? What are they? Have they been highlighted?	
Has relevant evidence from different sources (e.g. researchers from marginalised groups or community research) been identified? Has this been given importance and visibility in the analysis?	
Where appropriate, have case studies of marginalised communities experiencing poverty been included? Have these case studies explicitly explained/illustrated the intersecting nature of inequalities?	
Have we used clear and powerful language in relation to intersectionality, e.g. stating the impact of the overlaps of poverty, sexism, racism, ableism?	

<b>Developing advice and recommendations</b>	
<b>Check-in question</b>	<b>What are our next steps or mitigations?</b>
Do our recommendations assume a 'homogenous' experience for all people living in poverty?	
Have we used case studies or other approaches to test what the impact of our recommendations might be for people experiencing multiple marginalisations?	
Have we highlighted any gaps in our understanding relating to intersecting inequalities?	