



Meeting of the Poverty and Inequality Commission

Thursday 12 December 2024

10:00 – 12:30 pm

Virtual meeting - Microsoft Teams

Commission attendees

Professor Stephen Sinclair

Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick

Doctor Peter Cawston

Kim Dams

Taliah Drayak

Louise Hunter

Doctor Ross McQueenie

Rami Okasha

Paul Fletcher

Secretariat attendees

Katherine Hudson, Secretariat Manager

Rory Morrison, Analytical Manager

Órlaith McAree, Senior Participation Officer

Michele Barr, Secretariat Administrator

1. Welcome and apologies

Stephen Sinclair, Chair of the Commission, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Stephen Sinclair welcomed Paul Fletcher to his first Commission meeting as a member of the Commission.

2. Strategic Plan

Stephen Sinclair introduced the agenda item on the Commission's Strategic Plan. The Commission secretariat had updated the draft strategic plan based on the discussions at the Commission's induction day and an Experts by Experience Panel meeting, and subsequent feedback on the revised vision, mission, principles and priorities that were circulated to Commissioners for comment. Commissioners were content with most of the revisions to the Plan, and provided further comments and revisions. A final draft incorporating Commissioners' comments will be circulated by correspondence, with the aim of sending a final version to the Scottish Government by the end of December or early in 2025. The Commission will publish the Plan in the new year once agreed by Scottish Government.

3. Child Poverty Scrutiny

Stephen Sinclair introduced the Commission's Child Poverty Scrutiny 2024-25 paper. Following feedback from Commissioners and Panel members, the paper set out proposed topic areas for meetings with Scottish Government policy officials, and proposed how to incorporate suggestions from previous discussions, including how best to apply an inequalities lens to the scrutiny. Commissioners discussed the proposed areas for scrutiny and provided their views and comments.

Stephen highlighted that Commissioners will be asked to volunteer for meetings with Scottish Government policy teams as part of this scrutiny work and the secretariat will follow up with an email to check Commissioners availability for February, and also request for Commissioners preferred scrutiny topic areas, where these were not already known. Experts by Experience Panel members will attend the meetings with Commissioners and the secretariat.

4. Child Poverty Advice update

Katherine Hudson provided the Commission with an update on the Scottish Governments plans for its Delivery Plan, timescales, and what this may mean for the Commission's Child Poverty Advice. Stephen agreed that the secretariat should work up options for the Commission to consider, and that it may be helpful for Scottish Government officials to attend a subsequent Commission meeting to explain more about the Scottish Government's approach to the development of its next Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan.

5. Research Update

Rory Morrison provided an update on the Commission's research project. The Commission is currently proceeding through the Scottish Government procurement process. The secretariat expects to be able to issue the invitation to tender for this work before the Christmas holidays, running until mid-January, and for the work to be carried out in February and March and to be completed by the end of March 2025. Commissioners discussed the project and elements they would like to see in it.

6. Commission work plan

Stephen Sinclair informed the Commissioners that the Commission is required to provide a work plan to Scottish Government . The draft work plan covers the period Jan 25-Mar 26. The main focus of the Commission's work will be its child poverty scrutiny and advice. Stephen highlighted that there should be scope in Autumn 2025 to develop additional areas of work. Commissioners were content with the work plan and were asked to provide any further refinements to the workplan by email to the secretariat.

7. 3X1 Communications Contract update

Katherine Hudson provided Commissioners with an update on the 3x1 communications paper on the extension and increase to the contract value. The Commission was content to approve the contract extension and increase in value, subject to ensuring value for money in actual spend.

8. Feedback from UK Government Child Poverty Strategy meeting & meeting with the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice

Stephen Sinclair and Louise Hunter (in her role as Chief Executive of Who Cares? Scotland) attended the UK Government meeting on 21 November 2024. They provided reflections on the meeting, noting that Third Sector organisations in attendance at the event were emphasising that:

- The UK Government should not do anything that makes people worse off.
- Third Sector organisations are concerned about the employer National Insurance increase and how this will affect them.

Commissioners gave their views on the UK Government's approach to developing its child poverty strategy, and some of the actions it has taken in recent months.

Stephen provided an update on the Commission's regular quarterly meeting with the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice.

9. Budget and Pension Age Winter Heating Payment

Stephen Sinclair highlighted that the public debate around Pension Age Winter Heating payment was something that the Commission may benefit from returning to at a future meeting, and would be likely to be most helpful if it is focussed on a particular topic (as was the case with the PAWHP) rather than general discussions of targeting versus universalism. Commissioners provided their reflections on The Scottish Government Budget for 2025 to 2026. Commissioners welcomed the Scottish Government's intention to mitigate the two-child limit in future years..

10. Updates from Chair and Commissioners

Stephen Sinclair indicated that he had attended various meetings and would be happy to speak further to Commissioners on any of them. Stephen also highlighted that Commissioners would be welcome to join any future meetings with stakeholders. Suzanne Fitzpatrick indicated she would like to attend any further meetings with Castlemilk Housing and Human Rights Lived Experience Board.

Suzanne Fitzpatrick provided an update on her meeting with the Scottish Human Rights Commission and said she would circulate the minutes of the meeting when they become available.

7. AOB

- The next online Commission meeting will be on 23 January 2025.