

Meeting of the Poverty and Inequality Commission

Thursday 6 March 2025

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
Paul Fletcher
Rami Okasha

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.

2. Reflections on Commission child poverty scrutiny meetings and next steps

Stephen Sinclair updated that Commissioners and Panel members have now completed meetings with all the relevant Scottish Government policy officials as part of the Commission's child poverty scrutiny 2024-25. Commissioners fed back on the relevant scrutiny meeting topics they had attended along with members of the Experts by Experience Panel and Secretariat which were:

- Affordable housing supply
- Fairer Futures Partnerships
- Advice services
- Employability support
- Early learning and childcare & School age childcare

- Fuel poverty, heating and energy efficiency.
- Connecting Scotland
- Free school meals

Commissioners gave their views on delivery progress in each policy area from the meetings, whether the progress was likely to make a difference to child poverty, and discussed potential recommendations to include in the Commission's Child Poverty Scrutiny Report.

Katherine Hudson provided an update on the next steps: the secretariat will put together a summary of the main points coming out of the scrutiny meetings, this discussion, and separate discussions with Panel members. The Scottish Government written updates will be shared with the Commissioners and Panel Members who attended the relevant meeting scrutiny meetings. A joint meeting on the 31 March with Commissioners and Panel members has been organised to discuss the outcomes from the Child Poverty Scrutiny meetings and possible recommendations to make in the Child Poverty Scrutiny Report to Scottish Government.

3. Commission resourcing update

Katherine Hudson provided an update on the positive initial response from Scottish Government to the Commission on the business case previously submitted to the Scottish Government which requested the addition of a senior policy officer post for the secretariat. The additional resource will be considered at the next Scottish Government DG Communities Recruitment Review Panel which is scheduled for the 12 March and the secretariat will keep the Chair and Commission updated on progress.

4. 2023-24 Child poverty statistics publication

Stephen Sinclair highlighted that the latest Scottish Government child poverty statistics for the 2023-24 (the interim target year) are scheduled to be published on Thursday 27 March. Commissioners provided comments on what the Commission might say about the statistics upon release, and the secretariat confirmed they will work with the Commission's communications support to prepare a comment for the Chair to sign off before release.

5. Chair and Commissioner updates

- **SG Two child cap mitigation consultation and events:** Stephen Sinclair highlighted Scottish Government have recently opened a written consultation on their plans to mitigate the two child cap, and also roundtable consultation events, which the Commission have been invited to. There is an additional 'lived experience' event being organised in early April to which the secretariat are looking to send an Experts by Experience Panel member. The secretariat will prepare a draft response to the consultation which closes 18 April.

- **Commissioner Blogs:** Stephen Sinclair reminded Commissioners the secretariat is in the process of setting up interviews between 3x1 and Commissioners to prepare a blog for the Commission website. Commissioners who haven't responded around their preferences (whether they would like to write their own blog or have 3x1 draft the blog) can let the secretariat know in order for them to be arranged before the end of March.
- **Performance Conversations:** Stephen Sinclair reminded Commissioners that most of the Performance Conversations have now been set up and should be in diaries.
- **Panel member personal data:** Katherine Hudson updated Commissioners on the GDPR obligations around personal data of private citizens and the Commission's commitment to delete any personal data relating to Experts by Experience Panel members once they were no longer on the Panel and the data was no longer needed. Katherine reminded Commissioners this is something to bear in mind in relation to their information management and storage practices while the Experts by Experience Panel is ongoing, and that the secretariat will be in touch with more detailed information about data deletion practices when it is required.
- **Louisa Macdonell/Business in the Community Meeting:** Stephen Sinclair updated that he is meeting with Louisa Macdonell, Director Scotland, BITC on the 28 March. If Commissioners are unable to attend, they can send on agenda items to the secretariat.
- **Sara Snell HMIP meeting:** Stephen Sinclair is meeting with Sarah Snell, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons on the 14 March.
- **Russell Gunson, Robertson Trust Meeting.** Stephen Sinclair met with Russell Gunson, Head of Programmes and Practice, Robertson Trust on 5 March. Ross McQueenie and Louise Hunter attended the meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to hear an update on the work of the Minimum Income Guarantee Expert Group, and also other issues of shared interest to the Commission and Robertson Trust. The secretariat will invite Russell Gunson to a future Commission meeting to discuss the MIG report when it is complete.

6. AOB

- The next online Commission meeting will be on 17 April 2025.
- Suzanne Fitzpatrick updated that the UK Destitution Survey is starting on the 1 May. Suzanne is working with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation on the survey and may be in touch with individual Commissioners on this work.