



Strategic Plan

2025-2027

Foreword



Professor Stephen Sinclair

**Chair, Poverty and Inequality
Commission**

July 2024 marked five years since the establishment of the Poverty and Inequality Commission as a statutory body and saw a significant refresh of the Commission's membership. We have taken the opportunity of preparing our new Strategic Plan to reflect on the Commission's work so far and consider how to build on that in the coming years.

The Poverty and Inequality Commission was established as an advisory Non-Departmental Public Body to advise on, monitor, and promote the reduction of poverty and inequality in Scotland. The Commission's membership is not typical of most public bodies; between us we bring a range of skills and experience to our work, including lived experience of poverty, experience of delivering services, and research and policy expertise. At the heart of our work is the unique and vital contribution of lived experience provided by our Experts by Experience Panel.

This Strategic Plan sets out the Commission's mission and the vision and principles that will guide our work over the next three years. It has been developed with our Experts by Experience Panel. While the fiscal position in Scotland is currently challenging, we continue to be hopeful about what can be achieved, given the commitment across Scotland to tackling poverty and inequality. It is the Commission's duty and resolve to be ambitious in pushing for transformative action and honest if results fall short of what is necessary.

In setting our strategic priorities, we recognise that the next three years are crucial if Scotland is to meet its 2030 child poverty targets. The Scottish Government's final tackling child poverty Delivery Plan is due to be published in March 2026, setting out the roadmap for the last five year period to 2030-31 when the 2030 targets must be met. Advising on the next Delivery Plan and scrutinising progress will form a major part of our work, and this is reflected in our strategic priorities. These priorities also recognise the need for a greater focus on implementation to deliver the transformation required.

As always, we are grateful to all of the organisations and individuals who continue to support and contribute to our work, and thank the Commission's secretariat for the excellent support they continue to provide. We welcome feedback on our Strategic Plan, and look forward to continuing to work with others to deliver our priorities and progress together towards a Scotland where poverty and unjust inequalities no longer prevent anyone from living in dignity and thriving.

What is the Poverty and Inequality Commission?

The Poverty and Inequality Commission was established through the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017. It is an advisory non-departmental public body which provides independent advice and scrutiny to Scottish Ministers on poverty and inequality.

The Commission's responsibilities and powers are set out in the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017.

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

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

- Provides advice to Scottish Ministers on the Child Poverty Delivery Plans which the Scottish Government has to produce every four years
- Comments on annual progress towards the child poverty 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.

Who are the members of the Commission?

The Commission can have up to eight members and a Chair, who are appointed by Scottish Ministers through the public appointments process. They work for the Commission on a part-time basis, with the Chair appointed for four days a month, and Commissioners working one day a month. The Commission is supported by a secretariat provided by Scottish Government.

You can find out more about the current members of the Commission [on our website](#).

The Commission's Experts by Experience Panel

The Commission is committed to ensuring that experts by experience – people with lived experience of poverty and inequality – play a central role in identifying issues, developing and designing solutions, and scrutinising progress in tackling poverty and inequality. The Commission's first Experts by Experience Panel was established in August 2021, made up of 19 people from across Scotland with lived experience of poverty, and ran for almost two years, until June 2023. It became a key part of the Commission's approach, playing a crucial role in work such as the Commission's child poverty advice and scrutiny and its cost of living advice. After the first Panel ended, we published a [comprehensive learning report](#), highlighting the successes and learning from this work.

The Commission's second Experts by Experience Panel was established in March 2024. It is made up of 13 people from across Scotland who have current, or very recent, lived experience of poverty. Panel members are diverse in terms of their identity and their experiences of poverty and inequality. The Panel contributed to developing this strategic plan and we will continue to work to embed participation and the Panel's contribution across all the priorities set out in this plan. More information about our Experts by Experience Panel is [on our website](#).

Context

The Poverty and Inequality Commission's first strategic plan was published in 2020, at a time when Scotland was dealing with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time, the Commission noted that the challenges of reducing poverty in Scotland had increased as a result of the pandemic and the work to do so had become even more vital. Those challenges have since been compounded by the cost of living crisis, with its disproportionate impact on those living in poverty. While many people, understandably, want to move on from thinking about the pandemic, for many communities and individuals the impacts are still being felt.

These twin crises have caused serious harm for households across Scotland. They have also contributed to pressures on the Scottish Government's fiscal position as it works to deliver on its objective of reducing child poverty to the levels required by legislation. Looking forward, this new strategic plan covers a crucial period in the run up to 2030 when the child poverty targets are due to be met. In March 2025 we will find out whether the interim targets have been met, and in March 2026 the Scottish Government will publish its final Child Poverty Delivery Plan which should set out its route to meeting the 2030 targets.

As we prepared this strategic plan, the latest child poverty statistics show that child poverty levels in Scotland are broadly the same as they were when the Scottish Government's first tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan was published. This does not mean that nothing has changed. The introduction of the Scottish Child Payment, in particular, has made a big difference to children and families. The Scottish Government's own modelling has estimated that many thousands more children would be in poverty were it not for its actions on social security and the other drivers of poverty. Nevertheless, Scotland is at risk of running out of time to meet our 2030 child poverty targets.

The First Minister's statement that the eradication of child poverty is the single most important policy objective for his government, is a welcome re-commitment to delivering on the 2030 targets. While the fiscal context is challenging, the Scottish Government still has choices to make about how it raises revenue and uses its budget. It is crucial that, over the next three years, the policy agenda is reinvigorated and the needed resources directed towards tackling child poverty.

Advising the Scottish Government on its next Delivery Plan, and scrutinising progress towards the targets, will form a significant part of the Commission's work over the period of this strategic plan. The Commission will continue to advocate for the transformational change that will be needed to meet the targets, while providing constructive scrutiny and challenge on progress.

While child poverty will be a priority for the Commission, its remit is wider and it will continue to look at what is needed to reduce poverty and inequality more broadly in Scotland.

Our vision, mission and principles

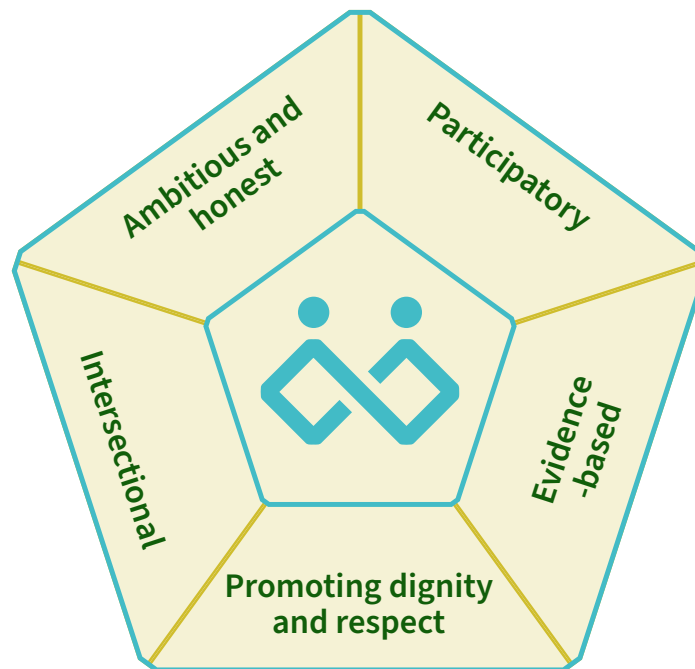
Our vision

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

Our mission

We work to strengthen policy, legislation, and practice to reduce poverty and inequality in Scotland. We do this by working with experts by experience, advising Scottish Ministers, monitoring progress, and advocating for change.

Principles



Ambitious and honest

We are ambitious about what can be achieved, and use constructive challenge to drive progress. We are honest about the progress that is being made and the action that is needed, even where that makes our advice and scrutiny challenging.

Participatory

We work with experts by experience to make sure they are heard by decision-makers. We work with our Experts by Experience Panel to make sure that they are part of identifying issues, developing and designing solutions and scrutinising progress.

Evidence-based

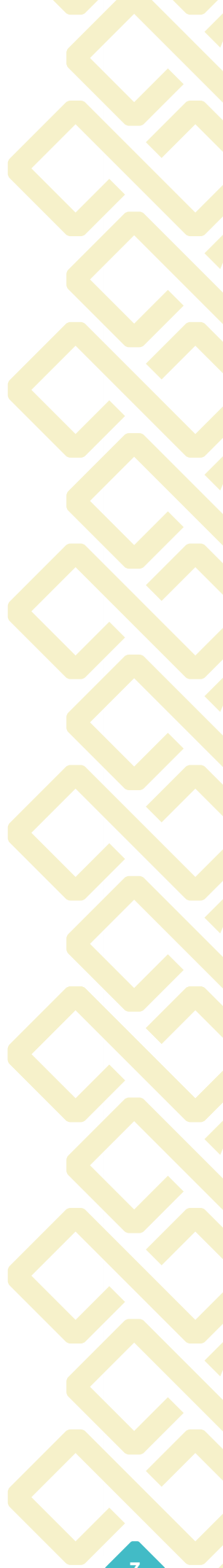
We use evidence from research, statistics, and from lived experience, to inform our advice and to scrutinise and monitor progress. We consider knowledge that comes from lived experience to be as important as other forms of evidence. We engage with, and share learning from, organisations working to tackle poverty and to support those with lived experience of poverty.

Intersectional

We recognise that people in the deepest poverty are likely to experience multiple intersecting inequalities, and we work towards an intersectional approach to our work. We keep people, their lives, their potential, and their individuality at the centre of what we do.

Promoting dignity and respect

We carry out our work in a way that promotes dignity and respect, and challenges the stigma and discrimination associated with poverty.



Our Strategic Priorities

Strategic Priority 1: Policy-making

We will work to ensure that reducing poverty and inequality is central to policy-making in Scotland, and that policy-making addresses the structural causes of poverty and inequality.

Strategic Priority 2: Child Poverty

We will keep the focus on Scotland's 2030 child poverty targets, by advising on actions to be included in the 2026-2031 child poverty delivery plan, scrutinising progress, and challenging where more is needed to meet the targets.

Strategic Priority 3: Implementation

We will encourage a focus on implementation of policies and actions, promoting use of data and evidence to inform delivery and understand impact.

Reporting on progress

We will report on progress in delivering on our strategic priorities in our annual report.

Strategic Priority 1: Policy-making

We will work to ensure that reducing poverty and inequality is central to policy-making in Scotland, and that policy-making addresses the structural causes of poverty and inequality.

Some policy areas, such as social security or employability, can have a big impact on poverty. However, poverty and inequality is not just a matter for policies traditionally considered to relate to income or social justice. A wide range of policy areas, such as health, transport, economic development, social care, skills, digital and the transition to net zero, have the potential to contribute to tackling poverty and inequality. In developing or reviewing any policy, the Scottish Government should be considering what role it can play in reducing poverty and whether it could have any unintended consequences that reinforce inequalities.

Over the period of this plan the Commission will continue its focus on ensuring that reducing poverty and inequality is central to policy-making across Scottish Government.

What will we do to deliver this priority?

The Commission will work with our Experts by Experience Panel to:

- Identify and investigate issues across different policy areas where action is needed, make recommendations, and advocate for action by Scottish Government, local government and partners
- Provide advice, on request, to Scottish Ministers on issues relating to poverty and inequality
- Ensure that the views and ideas of experts by experience are heard by the Scottish Government when policy is being developed, delivered and scrutinised
- Advocate for better integration of evidence in policy-making and in monitoring and evaluating the impact of policies
- Implement our intersectionality strategy, and encourage Scottish Government and others to take an intersectional approach in developing and monitoring policies
- Engage with partners to ensure that the Commission's advice and scrutiny draws on knowledge and expertise from across the third sector, local authorities and public bodies, universities, think tanks, businesses, community groups and beyond
- Engage regularly with Scottish Ministers and officials across Scottish Government and challenge, and offer advice, where we do not think enough is being done

Strategic Priority 2: Child Poverty

We will keep the focus on Scotland's 2030 child poverty targets, by advising on actions to be included in the 2026-2031 child poverty delivery plan, scrutinising progress, and challenging where more is needed to meet the targets.

Despite efforts to tackle child poverty, around 240,000 children in Scotland, and their families, are still living in poverty, with all the restrictions that places on their wellbeing and opportunities. The next Child Poverty Delivery Plan will be published by Scottish Government before the end of March 2026. This is the final Delivery Plan before the 2030 targets and it is crucial that it contains the transformational actions needed to meet those targets. It is also crucial that those actions are delivered.

Over the period of this strategic plan, the Commission will keep the focus on Scotland's 2030 child poverty targets, advising on action, scrutinising progress and continuing to ask difficult questions and challenge where more needs to be done.

What will we do to deliver this priority?

The Commission will work with our Experts by Experience Panel to:

- Scrutinise progress towards the Child Poverty targets, and challenge and advise where not enough progress is being made
- Advise the Scottish Government on what it needs to include in its next Child Poverty Delivery Plan in 2026, in order to reach the 2030 child poverty targets
- Make use of evidence, including evidence from lived experience and intersectional data, where available, to inform our advice and scrutiny
- Advocate to ensure that experts by experience are listened to and have a role in shaping the next Delivery Plan
- Encourage the Scottish Government to ensure that evidence is integrated into its decision-making about actions to tackle child poverty, that the impacts those actions are expected to have are fully identified, and to specify how those impacts will be measured
- Encourage partners across the public, third and private sectors to contribute towards meeting Scotland's child poverty targets, and highlight learning about what is working

Strategic Priority 3: Implementation

We will encourage a focus on implementation of policies and actions, promoting use of data and evidence to inform delivery and understand impact.

It is not enough to identify policy solutions to reduce poverty and inequality, these policies need to be funded, deliverable, and have the expected impact in practice. There is often an implementation gap between policy intention and what is delivered. Additionally there may be a gap between the intent of what is delivered, and how it is experienced by those the policy is intended to support.

Over the period of this strategic plan, the Commission will have a particular focus on implementation, considering how policies and actions are being delivered, whether they are delivering the expected impacts, what barriers there are to effective implementation, and how they are being experienced by those who are intended to benefit. We will pay attention to who does and does not benefit from implementation, and the experiences of different groups and communities, including those still experiencing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

What will we do to deliver this priority?

The Commission will work with our Experts by Experience Panel to:

- Consider implementation across our work, looking not just at whether the right policies are in place, but at what evidence there is about how they are being implemented and what impact they are having
- Scrutinise how Scottish Government raises revenue and makes decisions about spending to ensure that sufficient funding is allocated to deliver policy commitments and is used effectively to tackle poverty
- Encourage the Scottish Government and partners to set out how their policies and actions to tackle poverty and inequality will be implemented
- Encourage the Scottish Government and partners to specify how they will monitor and evaluate the implementation of policies and actions, and to use that information for improvement
- Advocate for the Scottish Government to work with experts by experience to monitor, evaluate, and improve implementation
- Take an intersectional approach to looking at how the impact of policies and actions might be experienced by different groups of people in Scotland, how this might reinforce inequalities, and what further action may be needed to address this
- Advocate for the Scottish Government to collect intersectional data and evidence about implementation and impacts, wherever possible



@povinequalscot

Visit our website
povertyinequality.scot

For general and press enquiries:
info@povertyinequality.scot