Poverty and Inequality Commission Annual Report 2024-2025

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Foreword from the Poverty and Inequality Commission Chair

I am very pleased to introduce this report outlining the work undertaken by the Poverty and Inequality Commission in the last year. This is the first annual report of the new Commission appointed in 2024. I would like to thank those Commissioners who completed their periods of office last year: Tressa Burke, Katie Schmuecker, Yvonne Blake and Alex Cobham. We will do our best to build upon their excellent legacy. I would also like to acknowledge the invaluable support provided by the Commission secretariat.

The work of the Commission has been enriched considerably by our collaboration with the Experts by Experience Panel, together with whom we have produced our annual scrutiny report. We have also benefited by sharing ideas and working with organisations representing the child poverty priority family types and with groups and communities most likely to experience deprivation in Scotland. The Commission looks forward to developing these relationships in our future work.

The Commission welcomes the clear statement of the First Minister that eradicating child poverty is the Scottish Government's first priority. We are also encouraged by the important measures taken to deliver this commitment, such as the Scottish Child Payment and the work underway to end the invidious two child limit in Scotland. We hope that the forthcoming UK government's child poverty strategy will show similar levels of commitment.

However, to make real progress it is imperative that we move beyond mitigation to preventing poverty. The Commission's response to the most recent child poverty statistics highlighted the scale of challenge that Scotland faces, and our 2023-2024 scrutiny report outlined that more needed to be done to meet the pledge made in the 2017 Child Poverty Act. 2026 will be a crucial year - with the publication of the final child poverty delivery plan to meet the 2030 targets, and a new Parliament charged with the responsibility to end child poverty in Scotland.

No child's life should be determined by an accident of birth. We must show that we value everyone equally by extending opportunities to all and removing harms inflicted on those who are not responsible for their situation. It is the Commission's duty to push for the changes necessary to realise this vision, even if this sometimes means voicing unwelcome messages and highlighting difficult choices. In this spirit and to this end, the Commission will continue work with others to do everything we can to deliver on the promise that Scotland has made to its children, and contribute to reducing poverty and inequality.

Professor Stephen Sinclair
Chair, Poverty and Inequality Commission

1. About us

The Poverty and Inequality Commission was established on 1 July 2019. It is an advisory non-departmental public body which provides independent advice and scrutiny to Scottish Ministers on poverty and inequality.

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.

We sometimes call these three different types of work that we do advice, scrutiny and advocacy.

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

- Provides advice to Scottish Ministers on Child Poverty Delivery Plans
- Comments on annual progress towards the 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.

2. Our Vision, Mission and Principles

July 2024 marked five years since the establishment of the Commission as a statutory body, and also saw a change of the Commission's membership. At this point of change, the Commission took the opportunity to work with members of the Commission's Experts by Experience Panel – people who have current or recent experience of poverty – to prepare a new Strategic Plan.

This new Strategic Plan, which covers the 2025-27 period, sets out the Commission's vision, mission and principles, along with three strategic priorities that the Commission will focus on during the next three years.

During the past year, the Scottish Government has committed to a period of reform for Scotland's National Performance Framework, with the current 11 National Outcomes remaining in effect for the period of reform. The Commission's advice, scrutiny, and advocacy work contributes to Scotland's National Performance Framework National Outcome on Poverty ("we tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally"), and also the existing Communities, Children and Young People and Human Rights Outcomes.

Our vision, mission and principles

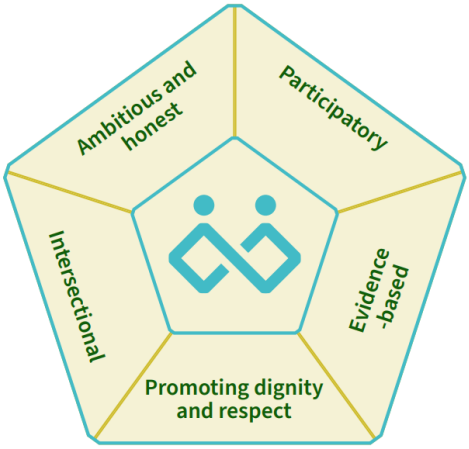
Our vision

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.

3. Our Strategic Priorities

As part of the process of developing our Strategic Plan, the Commission and our Experts by Experience Panel have identified three strategic priorities that will drive the Commission's work in the period up to December 2027. Our three Strategic Priorities are described below, and this Annual Report includes explanations of how the Commission's work and outputs in 2024-2025 relate to, and contribute to, these 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.

Some policy areas like social security or employment support have a large and direct impact on poverty. However, thinking on policy to reduce poverty should not be reserved only to policy areas that have a direct relationship with income. Policy areas like health, transport, social care, skills, economic development (and others) have the potential to contribute to reducing poverty and inequality. The Commission chose this priority to concentrate our work on doing what we can to ensure the Scottish Government maintains a focus on reducing poverty and inequality across all policy areas for which it has responsibility.

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.

During the past year, we have seen that, despite some signs of progress, all four of Scotland's interim child poverty targets have been missed. There is now a very limited window in which to act to meet the final targets set for 2030-31 and the Scottish Government's next Child Poverty Delivery Plan will have a crucial role in setting out the action needed to meet the targets in the short period of time now left. During the period of our new Strategic Plan, the Commission will keep this required focus on Scotland's 2030 child poverty targets, and on the actions needed to meet them.

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.

The ‘implementation gap’ is often talked about in reference to the distance between initial policy ambition, and what ultimately happens and who ends up benefiting. The Commission chose implementation as our final strategic priority to keep our work focused on identifying where delivery does not meet intention. We will be considering implementation across all our work by looking at how policies are being delivered, whether they are delivering the impacts expected, what barriers there are to delivery, and how those policies are being experienced by the intended beneficiaries.

4. Experts by Experience Panel

In March 2024, the Commission established a new Experts by Experience Panel ('the Panel'), which began activities in April 2024. When we say 'experts by experience' in relation to the Panel, we mean people who have current or very recent lived experience of poverty. This is the second iteration of the Commission's Experts by Experience Panel, and has been established to embed participation in the work of the Commission and to ensure that those with lived experience of poverty are engaged in all aspects of the Commission's work – advice, scrutiny and advocacy.

The Panel is made up of 12 experts by experience who are:

- based across Scotland, in cities, towns and rural areas.
- diverse in terms of their identity and their experiences of poverty and inequality.
- members of groups most likely to experience poverty in Scotland.

The Commission recruited 15 people in March 2024, but two members could not take up their roles given personal circumstances and one member stepped down from their role when they began full-time employment.

How the Panel works

The Panel will work with the Commission for two years. Panel members have a core meeting once every six weeks, usually online, which is also attended by at least one Commissioner, and members will meet more frequently to work on urgent or complex issues. Panel members work together and with Commissioners to identify issues, and to develop advice and scrutiny around poverty and inequality.

Panel members have agreed Terms of Reference and developed a Group Agreement. The Terms of Reference outlines the purpose of the Panel, the details of membership, the roles of Panel members and the Commission, and ways of working. The Group Agreement outlines how Panel members and members of the Secretariat work together in a group context.

In developing its approach with this Panel, the Commission is taking forward learning from the first iteration of the Panel, including that from our former Panel members.

At the end of the following section, there are more details about the Panel's activity in 2024-25.

5. Our work between April 2024 and March 2025

5.1 New Commissioners and development of strategic priorities

During the year, the Commission welcomed new members, Dr Peter Cawston, Kim Dams, Taliah Drayak, Louise Hunter, Dr Ross McQueenie and Rami Okasha (whose appointments commenced from 1 July 2024), and Paul Fletcher (from 1 December 2024). They joined existing Commissioners Professor Stephen Sinclair (Chair) and Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick (who deputises for the Chair when required).

The Commission used time at the start of the year to reflect on the Commission's work to date and consider the context in which the Commission will be working in the coming years. Commissioners and Panel members worked to develop the mission, vision and principles that will guide the Commission's work over the next three years, which are set out in the Commission's Strategic Plan 2025-2027. In doing so, Commissioners noted that efforts to reduce poverty and inequality in Scotland face significant challenges and barriers to progress. Constraints on the levels of public investment and fiscal challenges faced by national and local governments, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by the cost-of-living crisis, all combine with ongoing international uncertainty to present challenges to effective policy and delivery.

Despite these challenges, the Commission remains hopeful about what can be achieved, given the commitment in Scotland to ending poverty and inequality, and the positive steps taken so far. The Commission noted that the next three years will be crucial for both the delivery of Scotland's statutory child poverty targets, and reducing poverty and inequality more broadly. The Commission used this period of reflection, and the development of a new set of priorities, to reaffirm commitment to the Commission's duty and resolve in using all the means it has available to push for transformative action to meet these goals.

Outputs and other significant aspects of the Commission's work between April 2024 and March 2025 are set out below, along with a description of how they relate to and contribute to the Commission's three Strategic Priorities.

5.2 Poverty and Inequality Commission work on child poverty

Child Poverty Scrutiny Report 2023-24

The Commission published its Child Poverty Scrutiny Report 2023-24 in June 2024. The report set out the Commission's view on progress in 2023-24 towards meeting Scotland's statutory child poverty targets. For this year's report, the Commission chose to focus its scrutiny by looking more closely at the Scottish Government's 'priority family types' – six types of families that are at persistently higher risk of poverty. These families include:

- Lone parent families, the large majority of which are headed by women
- Families which include a disabled adult or child
- Larger families, with three or more children

- Minority ethnic families
- Families with a child under one year old
- Families where the mother is under 25 years of age

The Commission worked with organisations who work directly with parents and carers from priority family types to get parent and carers' views on whether they were aware of Scottish Government policies, how well they felt these policies were working, and what else they felt was needed. Seven organisations ran eight workshops for the Commission, with 111 participants in total, and one organisation ran a survey (21 survey responses). These included organisations working with lone parents, parents with disabled children, minority ethnic parents, refugee and asylum seeking parents, young parents, and parents with babies under the age of one. While these organisations were particularly focused on some of the priority family groups, the parents and carers they work with generally belonged to more than one of the priority family types. Participants were encouraged to feel able to share their views and experiences as a whole, not just in relation to any one characteristic or experience, in line with the Commission's commitment to an intersectional approach.

In addition to the workshops with parents and carers, the Commission asked the Scottish Government for information about how it was using the priority family types to guide its action on child poverty, in relation to a number of policy areas, and the extent to which it was taking an intersectional approach.

The Commission's scrutiny report concluded that limited progress had been made towards meeting the child poverty targets over 2023-24, and that while Scottish Government policies may have prevented an increase in the number of children in poverty, compared to a scenario where it took no action, the latest statistics available at the time showed that Scotland remained far from meeting its child poverty targets.

The Commission's scrutiny report made four recommendations for the Scottish Government:

- **Recommendation 1:** The Scottish Government should convene and lead a national cross-party and civil society agreement to develop a shared six year strategy to meet the 2030 child poverty targets. This cross-party approach should consider the choices that need to be made around tax and spending.
- **Recommendation 2:** The Scottish Government should reprioritise funding to ensure that the necessary resources are made available to deliver both its existing commitments and future actions to tackle child poverty. This will require the Scottish Government to reprioritise budgets across portfolios and consider the eligibility criteria for different services and support.
- **Recommendation 3:** The Scottish Government should act quickly on the recommendations set out in the Commission's report How better tax policy can reduce poverty and inequality.
- **Recommendation 4:** The Scottish Government should clarify and further develop how the priority family types are used to inform policy development, implementation and monitoring in policy areas related to the three key drivers of poverty.

The Scottish Government has subsequently taken forward action on Recommendation 4, producing guidance on the priority family concept which was published on 17 June 2025, but the Commission does not consider that the Scottish Government has taken the necessary action on the other three recommendations. Recommendation 1 is discussed further later in this report.

Report on workshops with priority families

As the priority family workshops were a rich source of valuable ideas and experiences, the Commission also published a separate Report of Workshops with Priority Families in Scotland and their Ideas to Reduce Child Poverty in October 2024. This report provided a platform to explore in more detail what parents and carers told the Commission. The report summarised what participants told the Commission on their awareness about social security, employment, and cost of living policies, how effective they thought those policies were, and what else they felt needed to happen. Participants also provided a number of suggestions of other ideas and actions for decision-makers to consider that the Commission shared with the Scottish Government. The Commission is grateful to all the participants in this work, and the organisations that supported them:

- Amina – The Muslim Women's Resource Centre
- Amma Birth Companions
- BEMIS
- Contact
- Fife Gingerbread
- Front Lounge
- Migrants Organising for Rights and Empowerment (MORE)
- One Parent Families Scotland

Comment on child poverty announcements and statistics

Following on from the observations around progress, recommendations and ideas contained in these two reports, the Commission commented on the Scottish Government's announcement that it intended to mitigate the UK Government's two-child limit in December 2024, welcoming the Scottish Government's plans, and later commented on the interim child poverty target statistics for 2023-24 that were published in March 2025. These data showed that all four child poverty interim targets had been missed, despite some signs of progress for some of the measures. The Commission's Chair's comment on these statistics was published in print media and he spoke on this topic on BBC Radio Scotland and the televised BBC Reporting Scotland Evening News.

Child Poverty Scrutiny 2024-2025

As part of preparation for the Commission's 2024-25 child poverty scrutiny report, in the final quarter of the year, Commissioners and Experts by Experience Panel members met with Scottish Government officials from selected priority policy areas to discuss progress on delivery during the past year. Commissioners and Panel members identified the areas they wanted to scrutinise and worked together to

decide on the questions that they wanted to discuss with officials. These included questions about implementation, funding, monitoring and evaluation, and the extent to which actions were delivering for the priority family types and people in rural areas. This work has continued into 2025-26, with the Commission's scrutiny report published on 17 June 2025.

How this work relates to the Commission's strategic priorities

Our reports, recommendations, and public comment on Scotland's child poverty targets help keep the focus on Scotland's child poverty ambitions (**Strategic Priority 2: Child Poverty**). Our work with partner organisations, who work with parents and carers from the priority family types at higher risk of poverty, helps the Commission understand the structural causes of poverty and inequality, how they are being experienced by different groups, and what policies may make a difference (**Strategic Priority 1: Policy-making**). The Commission's use of data and evidence in our child poverty work, including both statistical data and qualitative evidence the Commission hears from people with experience of poverty, has contributed to promoting its use to inform decisions and better understand impact (**Strategic Priority 3: Implementation**).

5.3 Options for developing a cross-party and civil society agreement to meet the 2030 child poverty targets

The Commission made the recommendation in its 2023-24 Child Poverty Scrutiny Report that the Scottish Government should convene and lead a national cross-party and civil society agreement to develop a shared six year strategy to meet the 2030 child poverty targets. The Commission has noted that a principle barrier to the resourcing and implementation of the kind of action required to meet the targets is the lack of a shared cross-party political agreement on how to do so.

Following a meeting between the Chair of the Commission and the First Minister in July 2024, it was agreed the Commission would develop some options setting out how this could be taken forward and share these with Scottish Government officials.

The Commission produced a paper on Options for developing a national cross-party and civil society agreement to develop a shared six year strategy to meet the 2030 child poverty targets, published in January 2025. It provided two options that could help create the kind of cross-party and civil society agreement of the kind the Commission recommended, as well as outlining the role the Commission could play in such an approach. The Scottish Government provided a response to the Commission indicating that it had decided not to pursue either option.

How this work relates to the Commission's strategic priorities

The Commission carried out this work on developing options for cross-party agreement in order to build on a recommendation it made in relation to **Strategic Priority 2: Child Poverty**, to further detail an area where the Commission feels that more is needed to meet the targets. In addition, the ambition behind the options developed was to build political agreement on the choices that should be made on the most effective policies at reducing poverty, tax and spending plans, accelerating delivery, and making poverty and inequality more central to policy-making in Scotland, in alignment with **Strategic Priority 1: Policy-making.**

5.4 Social Justice and Social Security Committee Post Legislative Scrutiny of the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017

In 2024-2025, the Scottish Parliament's Social Justice and Social Security Committee undertook Post Legislative Scrutiny of the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017. This explored the difference that having a statutory, rather than a non-statutory, approach has made to achieving the policy aims around child poverty. It also looked at what difference the statutory status of the Poverty and Inequality Commission made to scrutiny.

The Commission responded to a Call for Views, identifying a number of ways in which the introduction of a statutory framework for reducing child poverty was making a difference to how the Scottish Government was approaching reducing child poverty. It noted that the child poverty targets have created a focus on the scale of change that is needed, and that annual reporting has increased accountability. It also offered some reflections on the Commission's own scrutiny role. Chair Professor Stephen Sinclair also provided oral evidence to the Committee to inform its final report.

The Committee's report noted that it had heard that the work of the Poverty and Inequality Commission was welcomed. The Poverty Alliance praised the Commission's "timely reporting that allows for the Scottish Government to be held to account" and how its broad remit on all aspects of poverty "spotlights the necessity of holistic and intersectional approaches to anti-poverty action." Scottish Borders Council highlighted in their evidence that "the Commission's independence gives added credibility, weight, and authority to its pronouncements, which has a further catalysing impact on action."

The report also noted that "some raised concerns in their evidence about the Commission's limited resources and how the timescales it needs to adhere to for its scrutiny work impact on how much it can achieve". The Scottish Government has since approved resources for an additional member of staff for the Commission's secretariat team.

Photo: Commission Chair Professor Stephen Sinclair giving evidence to the Scottish Parliament's Social Justice and Social Security Committee, November 2024. Image source: Scottish Parliament

5.5 Commission consultation responses and submissions

Over the course of 2024-25 the Commission gave its views on matters within its remit through consultation responses and proving evidence in other forms.

These included:

- The Commission responded to a Department for Work and Pensions consultation on the development of a new measure of poverty called 'Below Average Resources' based on the Social Metrics Commission approach to poverty measurement in April 2024. In its response, the Commission highlighted that it would like to see a better approach to estimating the inescapable costs of disability that come closer to capturing the true extra costs of disability.

- The Commission provided a submission to a short inquiry on the Scottish Child Payment from the Scottish Parliament's Social Justice and Social Security Committee. The Commission Chair Professor Stephen Sinclair also attended an oral evidence session with the Committee as part of its inquiry in May 2024. The Commission's submission highlighted the important contribution that the Scottish Child Payment could make to reducing child poverty in Scotland, and the positive feedback it had heard about the impact of the Scottish Child Payment for households in poverty, including from its workshops with the priority families.

How this work relates to the Commission's strategic priorities

The Commission's contributions to the Scottish Parliament on the Scottish Child Payment, and the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 directly relate to the Commission's **Strategic Priority 2: Child Poverty.** The Commission's views on the development of new statistical data sources on poverty and low household resources contributes towards the Commission's **Strategic Priority 3: Implementation,** to generate data that allows a better understanding of policy impact.

5.6 Meetings and events

The Chair and new members of the Commission used their first year in their new roles to engage with a wide range of organisations, to inform the new Commission's thinking, and to make connections for future work.

Photo: The First Minister, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, and Commission Chair Professor Stephen Sinclar, and other stakeholders at a roundtable discussion on child poverty at Bute House. Image source: Scottish Government. Image source: Scottish Government

Over the course of the year the Chair and the Commission have met on various occasions with the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government, and the First Minister, to discuss matters relating to the Commission's remit and the Scottish Government's priority of eradicating child poverty. The Chair of the Commission also engaged with the UK Government and UK Government ministers at a roundtable in Scotland to inform the development of the UK Government child poverty strategy.

The Chair and members of the Commission accepted invitations to present and speak at events, including the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations Annual

Conference in June 2024, the Scottish Pantry Network conference in September 2024, and the Energy Action Scotland Annual Conference in November 2024.

Photo: Members of the Commission with the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP, September 2024.

As the Commission was keen to hear about work happening in Scotland and ideas to reduce poverty and inequality, particularly from those with direct experience of working in communities, the Chair and Commissioners also met with a wide variety of other organisations over the course of the year to hear the policy action they felt was needed.

These organisations have included:

- Citizens Advice Scotland
- The Poverty Alliance
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation Scotland
- The Equality and Human Rights Commission
- Broke not Broken
- Education Scotland
- Public Health Scotland
- Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights
- Inclusion Scotland
- The Castlemilk Housing and Human Rights Lived Experience Board
- Children's Hospices Across Scotland
- IPPR Scotland
- The Robertson Trust
- Business in the Community

5.7 Experts by Experience Panel Activities 2024 – 25

Panel activities at a glance

How have Experts by Experience Panel members found things in 2024-25?

The Commission will be carrying out mid-term monitoring over the coming months to find out more about what is working well with the Panel and how things can be improved. In the meantime, we have asked Panel members about their experience with the Commission in 2024-25.

What part of being a Panel member have people most enjoyed in 2024-25?

Most Panel members told us that in 2024-25 they have most enjoyed learning through their role, from meetings and discussions exploring poverty in Scotland and how government works, to training on EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) and digital skills; from hearing the views and experiences of other Panel members, to learning from the experiences of a former Panel member (who is now a Commissioner).

Others most enjoyed meeting and sharing with others, including other Panel members, Commissioners and Scottish Government officials, being part of a team and acting to making change.

What part of being a Panel member have people found most challenging in 2024-25?

Challenges raised by Panel members fell under two areas: activities for the Commission's annual child poverty scrutiny, and time limitations (both personal, and within the programme).

A few Panel members found the child poverty scrutiny work, particularly the meetings with officials, most challenging for different reasons:

- One Panel member felt the Commission and Scottish Government should be on the 'same side' in addressing poverty but that it did not always feel like that in the meetings. They said, 'even though it was a great experience, it still felt like an us and them situation. We were almost tottering on "not wanting to

step on their toes" inasmuch as we wanted clarity and perhaps solidarity in most issues.'
- One Panel member found it challenging to understand how SG officials spoke and said, 'to me it's a lot of waffle and little substance.'

Time was raised as a challenge by two Panel members, but for different reasons:

- Time in broader life to focus on Panel activities, particularly given caring responsibilities. 'Probably just time, which isn't an issue with the panel, being a carer means that sometimes I have almost no time…other times I have extra time for the panel. It's just part and parcel of my life.'
- Time limitations for fulfilling role of a Panel member and doing what needs to be done in the limited time members have. 'Having the amount of time to effectively work as this work could go on for many days beyond what we have available.'

Some Panel members said they hadn't had any challenges during the year.

What impact (positive or negative) has the Panel had on Panel members in 2024-25?

Working together to make change

'Being a panel member boosted my confidence, deepened my understanding of poverty, and empowered me to influence real change in Scotland.'

'Made me realise I am not the only one struggling we all hope to make an impact for a better future.'

'I have a sense of purpose within the panel. I feel I'm listened to. I also feel we are trying to make changes to improve people's lives.'

'I think it has been positive, I want to make Scotland a better place, I hope that I'm doing that.'

'Yes it is positive, I have build up my confidence level by working together with panel members and Commissioners.'

Reflection and Learning

'It has made me more aware of the broad issues faced by people across Scotland.'

'It's made me more reflective of things - known and unknown and also brought many questions of how to improve services even where there are "supposed" provisions. Still, in our eyes- the government is not doing enough. Pumping money into services is not the solution to poverty, but a proper follow through of how those said funds reach their intended recipients.'

‘It’s been great and good to have an insight to these issues.’

‘It allows knowledge (which is power).’

6. Financial Summary

The Poverty and Inequality Commission was allocated a budget of £391,528 by the Scottish Government for 2024-25. The Commission's budget is held by the Scottish Government and the Commission is not required to produce audited accounts.

The table below provides a summary of the money that was spent on behalf of the Commission between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025.

The Commission reported a budget underspend this year. This was partly due to Commission meetings and events being held online which reduced costs. The underspend was returned to Scottish Government.

Budget – April 2024 to March 2025	**£391,528**
Staff costs	£284,118
Total running costs (this includes Commissioner fees and expenses, meetings and events, research, communications & IT, administration and training, and the costs of running the Commission's Experts by Experience Panel)	£92,209
Total	**£376,327**

7. Our work in 2025-2026

In March 2026, the Scottish Government is due to publish its final tackling child poverty delivery plan before the 2030 child poverty targets are due to be met. Scrutiny and advice on child poverty will therefore form a substantial part of the Commission's work for 2025-2026.

In the early part of 2025, the Commission and Experts by Experience Panel will complete and publish their child poverty scrutiny report for 2024-25. Following this, the Commission and Panel will work together to develop advice for Scottish Government on what should be included in the next tackling child poverty delivery plan.

The Commission and Panel will then develop areas for future work, aligned with the Commission's strategic priorities.

8. Membership of the Commission

Current members

Professor Stephen Sinclair (Chair)
Stephen is Professor of Social Policy and Co-director of the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit at Glasgow Caledonian University.

Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick (deputises for the Chair as required)
Suzanne is the Director of the Institute for Social Policy, Housing, and Equalities Research (I-SPHERE) at Heriot Watt University.

Dr Peter Cawston (joined July 2024)
Peter worked as a GP in Drumchapel, Glasgow for 25 years. He has recently left his practice and is now supporting Deep End GP practices in Glasgow as well as taking on a new role supporting remote and rural GP practices.

Kim Dams (joined July 2024)
Kim is CEO of a regional disability organisation in Dumfries and Galloway, called DG Voice, an organisation run by and for disabled people with long-term health conditions. She is also a Non-Executive board member of the local health board and the Integrated Joint Board in Dumfries and Galloway.

Taliah Drayak (joined July 2024)
Taliah is a children and families advocate. She has been a member of the Promise Oversight board for three years and is committed to keeping the Promise.

Louise Hunter (joined July 2024)
Louise is currently Chief Executive of Who Cares? Scotland and serves as a member of the National Suicide Prevention Advisory Group.

Dr Ross McQueenie (joined July 2024)
Ross is a mixed-methods public health intelligence adviser leading on vaccine inequalities at Public Health Scotland.

Rami Okasha (joined July 2024)
Rami is the Chief Executive of CHAS, Children’s Hospices Across Scotland. He is the Chair of the Scottish Partnership for Palliative Care and previously served on the Equalities and Human Rights Commission’s Scotland Committee.

Paul Fletcher (joined December 2024)
Paul Fletcher is the Chief Executive Officer of Achieve More Scotland, a charity which focuses on supporting children, young people and families living in poverty to improve their life chances. Paul has worked in the charitable sector for 15 years, from being a front line volunteer and youth worker, to business development manager, to Chief Operating Officer and now CEO.

Members whose appointment came to an end during 2024-2025

Katie Schmuecker (end of November 2024)
Yvonne Blake (end of June 2024)
Tressa Burke (end of June 2024)
Alex Cobham (end of June 2024)