Meeting of the Poverty and Inequality Commission

Thursday 12 June 2025
10:00 – 12:00 pm
Virtual meeting - Microsoft Teams

Commission attendees
Professor Stephen Sinclair
Dr Peter Cawston
Kim Dams
Taliah Drayak
Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick
Paul Fletcher
Louise Hunter

Secretariat attendees
Katherine Hudson, Secretariat Manager
Rory Morrison, Analytical Manager
Órlaith McAree, Senior Participation Officer

Apologies
Dr Ross McQueenie
Rami Okasha

1. Welcome and apologies

Stephen Sinclair, Chair of the Commission, welcomed everyone to this additional Commission meeting, noting that it had been scheduled to allow extra time for Commissioners to reflect on their experience of the Commission so far, and to review the Commission's work during 2024-25 as set out in a draft Annual Report. Apologies were given for Ross McQueenie and Rami Okasha.

2. Annual Report

Commissioners provided comment on the draft of the Commission's annual report for 2024-25 that had been circulated ahead of the meeting. Commissioners indicated they were broadly content with the report, but asked that some amendments be made to better highlight work relating to the issues facing disabled people and other priority family types, along with rural issues and the additional impacts of intersectionality. The Commission also agreed to some changes to the balance of different types of content in the report and to refer to the Scottish Government

response to the 2023-24 child poverty scrutiny report. The Commission agreed to delegate sign-off of the final draft of the report to the Chair.

3. Reflections on Commission performance

Commissioners discussed their experience of the Commission so far and potential areas for further development or change. Commissioners generally considered that the Commission was working well, and reflected that they felt there were high quality discussions taking place at meetings.

Suggestions were made in relation to how the Commission does business. Commissioners noted that agendas were always full and considered other ways to carry out Commission work between meetings. Commissioners discussed capacity and resources, and the time that was allocated to Commissioners to undertake their role. The value of having some in-person meetings was discussed, and it was noted that there would be an in-person meeting at the start of September and a further in-person meeting could be arranged after that if it was felt to be useful.

Commissioners discussed the Commission's role in relation to inequality, and noted that, since new Commissioners joined in July 2024, the focus of its work had been on poverty, and child poverty in particular, rather than inequality. The Commission discussed to what extent this was about taking an inequalities lens to its work on poverty, and to what extent it should be about looking at income and wealth inequality more specifically. The value of having Commissioners who pro-actively ensured that inequalities were considered in Commission discussions was highlighted.

The Commission discussed how it could assess the impact it was having and how effective it was. It was noted that there had been positive comments about the Commission as part of the Social Justice and Social Security Committee's post-legislative scrutiny of the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017, but that it would be good to know more about the Scottish Government and other stakeholders' views of the Commission's effectiveness. As the Commission is an advisory body, it was noted that it cannot control what happens as a result of its advice and scrutiny, but it can try to shape its advice and scrutiny to have maximum impact. It was agreed that there should be further reflection on what success would look like for the Commission, within existing capability and constraints.

4. Experts by Experience Panel

Órlaith McAree introduced this item by outlining the past and current relationship between the Commission and Panel, views from Panel members towards recent joint work, and future options and opportunities.

The Commission discussed their ways of working with the Panel, including the importance of both Commissioners and Panel members being able to share their respective knowledge and evidence and being able to respectfully question and challenge. Commissioners were very positive about working with the Panel and

noted that the feedback from Panel members about the scrutiny process had been positive. Commissioners noted feedback from Panel members and Commissioners that the scrutiny meetings with Scottish Government officials had varied, with some meetings feeling very open and engaged on Commissioner/Panel member questions and ideas while others were less so. There was discussion over whether the Commission's approach of sharing questions for discussion with the Scottish Government in advance was the right one.

It was agreed that the Commission and Panel should collaborate and co-produce work as much as possible, but that how this was done should reflect what made sense for individual pieces of work, rather than having a single model for everything the Commission does. It was noted that the Commission should try and ensure the Panel was aware of what could be achieved, for example where a matter was reserved and not within Scottish Government powers, so that it did not build unrealistic expectations through facilitating discussions or gathering ideas on issues where change was not possible.

5. Future priorities

The Commission discussed developing its future priorities and topics of interest. It was identified that the Commission would need to make a decision about its approach to its child poverty scrutiny for 2025-2026, and whether this would be an in-depth analysis of progress, as in the past year's work, or whether instead it would draw on its child poverty advice and review the Scottish Government's new Delivery Plan (due March 2025). It was noted that the approach chosen would then define the capacity that the Commission has for other work. There were a range of views about the approach to the scrutiny report, and it was agreed that the secretariat would follow up by email for a final decision