

Cross-Party Group on Poverty

Friday 9th January 2026, 10:00 – 10:15

Minute

Present

MSPs

- Alex Rowley MSP
- Beatrice Wishart MSP, Deputy Convener
- Carol Mochan MSP
- Paul O’Kane MSP, Convener

Non-MSP Group Members

- Agnes Tolmie, Scottish Women’s Convention
- Amanda Foster
- Cara Hilton, Trussell
- Chloe Campbell, the Poverty Alliance
- Colin Campbell Edinburgh Food Project
- David Dick, EIS
- Declan Harvey
- Eilee Cawley, Scottish Pensioner Forum
- Gary Christie, the Poverty Alliance
- Keith Robson, Open University
- Laura van der Hoeven, Edinburgh Food Project
- Philippa Kemp, One Parent Families Scotland
- Ralph Hartley, the Poverty Alliance
- Rebecca Fagan, Advice Direct Scotland
- Ruth Boyle, the Poverty Alliance
- Salena Begley, Family Fund
- Susan McKellar, Scottish Women’s Convention

Apologies

- Anne-Marie Clements, Justice and Peace Scotland
- Leah Duncan-Karrim, One Parent Families Scotland
- Mike Corbett, NASUWT
- Rhoda Grant MSP
- Traci Kirkland, Govan Community Project

Welcome and introduction

Paul O’Kane (POK) welcomed attendees to the meeting, and thanked them for attending on short notice. He highlighted that the purpose of the meeting was to reflect on the work of the group over the past year, and to conduct the group’s AGM in line with the guidance set out for CPGs by the Scottish Parliament.

AGM

Round up of the CPG's work in the past year

POK handed over the Chloe Campbell, Policy and Parliamentary Officer at the Poverty Alliance, to provide an overview of the work of the group over the last 12 months.

The first meeting of 2025 was a joint session with the CPG on Disability, which highlighted the connection between disability and poverty. Members heard from Karen Wylie, Policy and Parliamentary Manager at the Glasgow Disability Alliance, who detailed the desperate situation for many disabled people in Scotland as a result of successive cuts to funding and support. She outlined findings from a GDA engagement exercise which found that disabled people are struggling with heating their homes, accessing mental health support and accessing social care to meet their needs. The group then heard from John McArdle and Bill Scott, both long-time anti-poverty and disability rights campaigners, about the further harm to disabled people that the then proposed cuts to Personal Independence Payment would cause and the inaccessibility of the consultation process around these proposed changes to social security. Kaukab Stewart, the Scottish Government's Minister for Equalities, was present in the meeting so was able to respond to speakers remarks, stating that the Scottish Government has a deep commitment to improving the lives of disabled people and the focus that this would give to families with a disabled adult or child in the next Child Poverty Delivery Plan. Chloe reflected that this felt like a particularly useful meeting. It had allowed space to discuss a proposed piece of legislation going through a consultation process, to ask questions of the Minister and to ask other MSP attendees to feed back to their Westminster colleagues on what they had heard from campaigners about the proposed legislative changes to social security. It also stands as an example of something that could work well in the future, particularly on collaborating with other CPGs.

In the summer, the CPG hosted an event as part of the Scottish Parliament's Festival of Politics. Our event, "Give me some credit!", brought together lived experience researchers and policy and campaigns experts who worked on the 'Cost Me Some Credit' photovoice project to discuss issues of financial exclusion, particularly in the context of the inaccessibility of affordable credit. David Reilly from the Poverty Alliance, Rebecca Deegan from Fair by Design, and Sally Eames and Lee who were Peer Researchers on the project, discussed how financial exclusion impacts on individuals, families, and communities – and what we can do to build a fairer system that enables everyone to live in security.

The group's final meeting of the year took place in November and focused on the theme of migration and poverty. Attendees heard from Dr Rebecca Kay, Associate Director of Migration Scotland, who spoke about the findings of their work around poverty more generally and specific policy recommendations they had for national government and parliamentarians to reduce the hardship being experienced by migrant families. We were joined also by Professor Beth Watts-Cobbe, Deputy Director of the Institute for Social Policy, Housing and Equalities Research, who presented findings from an evaluation of the Fair Ways Scotland programme.

Chloe closed by reflecting that the CPG's meeting this year had provided rich discussion, much of which is captured in meeting minutes which have been circulated to the full membership, and are available on the Scottish parliament website, if members are interested in catching up on that.

Election of Convener

POK vacated the chair for Beatrice Wishart (BW) to lead the election of the CPG's Convener. BW stated that POK had indicated his desire to continue as Convener. BW proposed POK as Convener. All present were in agreement. POK confirmed as Convener. POK gave his thanks to the CPG's members for their participation in meetings, and to the Poverty Alliance for their work as Secretariat.

Election of Deputy Convener

BW handed chair back to POK to lead the election of the CPG's Deputy Convener. BW had indicated her desire to continue in her role. POK proposed BW as Deputy Convener. All present were in agreement. BW confirmed as Deputy Convener. BW confirmed that she was stepping down at the next election, and looked forward to continuing to champion the work of the group through a non-MSP role.

Election of Secretariat

The Poverty Alliance had indicated their desire to continue as Secretariat of the CPG. POK propose the Poverty Alliance as Secretariat. All present were in agreement. The Poverty Alliance were confirmed as Secretariat. Chloe, speaking on behalf of the Poverty Alliance, thanked POK and BW for their work and commitment to the group over the past year, and members for the rich discussion that they had brought to meetings.

AOB and close

There was no other business raised by members. POK closed the meeting, stating that, if another meeting is to be held before Parliament dissolves in March, details will be circulated to members.