

Cross-Party Group on Poverty

Minutes: 12.30pm - 1.30pm, Tuesday 23rd
November 2021

Attendees:

Neil Gray MSP, Emma Roddick MSP, Pam Duncan-Glancy MSP, Collette Stevenson MSP, Bob Doris MSP, Alex Rowley MSP, Beatrice Wishart MSP, Rhoda Grant MSP, Bob Doris MSP, Monica Lennon MSP, Neil Cowan (Poverty Alliance), Peter Kelly (Poverty Alliance), Suzi Murning (Poverty Alliance), Sarah Kyambi (Migration Policy Scotland), Catriona Melville (Age Scotland), Sue Lyons (HUG Action for Mental Health), Katie Birrell (Women's Enterprise Scotland), Ann Mulgrew (Children's Panel), Liz Paterson (Iona Community), Ailsa MacKenzie (The Pyramid at Anderston), Ryan McShane, Marion Davis (One Parent Families Scotland), Mairi McCallum (Moray Food Plus), Jimmy Wilson (FARE Scotland), Correne Fulton (Office of Monica Lennon MSP), Marie Ward (Cranhill Development Trust), Craig Samuel (National Association of Welfare Rights Advisers), Revd. Gary Noonan (Houston and Killellan Kirk), Julie Podet (Dalkeith and District CAB), John McIntyre, Roslyn Neely (Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity), Emma Jackson (Christians Against Poverty), Kirsty McNeill (CRER), Anne McCormack (Broke Not Broken), Fiona McAvoy (Newton Primary School), Mark Stevens, Charis Scott (Christians Against Poverty), Rev. Thoman Penman (South Uist and Benbecula Free Church), Jamie Livingstone (Oxfam Scotland), Rob McDowall (Welfare Scotland), Fiona King (Save the Children), Derek Rankine (SURF), Emma Congreve (Fraser of Allander Institute), Frank Mosson (Bridgeton CAB), Jack Evans (Joseph Rowntree Foundation), Stephanie Millar (Citizens Advice Scotland), Anne Baldock (One Parent Families Scotland), Cara Hilton (Trussell Trust), Brian Scott (Glasgow Disability Alliance), Ed Pybus (CPAG), Alan Dalziel, Mike Corbett (NASUWT Scotland), Traci Kirkland (Govan Community Project), David Aitchison (Shelter Scotland), Julie Semple (Bute Advice Centre), Charles Martin (The Wise Group), Tanya Jones, Kim Somerside (Voluntary Health Scotland), Niki Powers (Let's Talk), Terry McTernan (Darkwood Crew), Stephen Sinclair (Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit), Megan Farr (CYPSCS), Meg Thomas (Includem), Julie Hepburn, Andrea Bradley (EIS), Daniela Rondina (Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance), Lorraine Gillies (Scottish Community Safety Network), Eileen Cawley (Scottish Pensioners Forum), Vonnie Sandlan (Children 1st), Bill Scott (Poverty and Inequality Commission), Rhiannon Sims (Crisis), Susan McKellar (Scottish Women's Convention), Kirsty-Louise Hunt (Barnardos Scotland), Neil Mathers (Curiosity Collective)

Apologies:

Jeremy Balfour MSP, Miles Briggs MSP

1) Welcome and introduction

- Neil Gray introduced the meeting and outlined the key aims of the CPG. He noted that this will be the first CPG on Poverty in Scottish Parliament history.
- It was noted that a sufficient number of MSPs were present to enable the group to be quorate and to confirm cross-party support for the establishment of the group.
- Neil Gray noted that the CPG will aim to meet once per month, and that it will focus on exploring 2-3 issues each parliamentary year that would lead to some form of publication.
- The Poverty Alliance were proposed and accepted as the group's secretariat.

2) CPG's purpose

- There was no opposition to the statement of purpose, which was agreed as: *"The Cross Party Group on Poverty aims to act as a forum for exploring the drivers of and solutions to poverty in Scotland. It will act to connect MSPs with organisations working to tackle poverty, as well as with people living on low incomes across Scotland, in order to better inform anti-poverty policy-making and contribute to the ending of poverty in Scotland."*

3) Election of office bearers

- Neil Gray was unanimously elected as convenor. Pam Duncan-Glancy and Beatrice Wishart were elected as Deputy Convenors. Jeremy Balfour was elected as Treasurer.

4) Poverty in Scotland: Where we are and where we are going

- Peter Kelly (Director, Poverty Alliance) provided a short presentation on 'Poverty in Scotland: Where we are and where we are going', which outlined some of the key recent trends in relation to poverty in Scotland, as well as what some of the drivers of poverty in Scotland currently are.

5) Discussion on CPG work plan

- Bob Doris MSP suggested the CPG is used to explore the strategic prioritisation of anti-poverty spending, at both a national and local level.

- Beatrice Wishart MSP proposed the CPG is used to explore experiences of poverty in rural areas.
- Pam Duncan-Glancy MSP proposed the CPG look specifically at what we can do to reduce poverty in particular groups that experience inequalities, for example, BAME people, women, and disabled people. She also reflected on the importance of involving people with lived experience of poverty in the work of the CPG.
- Collette Stevenson MSP proposed that the CPG explore experiences of stigma, particularly among young people experiencing poverty.
- Alex Rowley MSP highlighted that many communities and third sector organisations feel excluded from decision-making processes. He suggested the CPG explore the role of the third sector in supporting communities..
- Terry McTernan noted that a good starting point would be to reflect on the solutions to poverty that communities themselves have identified as there are lessons to be learned.
- John McIntyre noted that in Scotland we are having the same conversation about poverty that we had 40 years ago. People living in poverty feel disempowered. He agreed that giving power to communities is important. He also noted that people in areas of high deprivation often do not benefit from the job opportunities that exist in Scotland.
- Vonnie Sandlan highlighted that we still do not know what the end of furlough means for children and families across Scotland. She also highlighted that many people living in poverty are in work. Poverty is not a homogenous experience and the CPG's work ought to be very clear about this fact. She proposed that the CPG ought to hear from organisations such as Living Wage Scotland or the CBI. Lastly, she noted that the upcoming Scottish Parliament bills seeking to incorporate Human Rights treatise into Scot Law presents an opportunity for the CPG.
- Brian Scott noted that disabled people remain a priority group for poverty reduction measures, but that we ought to take an intersectional approach as many disabled people also fall into other target groups, for example they are also single parents and live in rural areas. He also suggested the CPG look at the Social Renewal Advisory Board's recommendations and scrutinise whether these calls to action are being taken forward.
- Mike Corbett noted that stigma and shame remains a major issue, especially in schools. The CPG could identify good practices from specific areas and promote these practices across the country.

- Megan Farr noted that what is more important than how we define poverty is how we target interventions because, for example, there are small towns with high deprivation in rural areas that are, on average, doing well.
- Charles Martin noted that those who have experienced poverty ought to co-design interventions as they are experts by experience, and proposed that the CPG look at how to better embed co-design in policy processes.
- Charis Scott noted that we ought to look at the impact of poverty and problem debt on health, particularly mental health.

ACTION: Poverty Alliance to work with the elected office-bearers to collate ideas/suggestions/proposals and draft a work plan for the CPG; to be circulated among CPG members prior to the next meeting and to be discussed at the next meeting

ACTION: Any additional ideas/suggestions/proposals for the work plan should be sent to Neil Cowan (neil.cowan@povertyalliance.org) by Monday 7th December.

6) Closing remarks

- Neil Gray MSP expressed thanks for such a strong turnout of attendees, and expressed his hope that the group would be an impactful and productive one that would work on a cross-party and cross-sector basis.

ACTION: Next meeting agreed as 12.30pm - 1.30pm on Wednesday 15th December. Poverty Alliance to circulate meeting details in due course.

ACTION: Neil Gray to formally register the group with the parliamentary authorities