

Turning up the volume on poverty



THE
Poverty Truth
Commission



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GORBALS

An Opening Word

'When people in poverty are listened to, change happens.' TRICIA

That is the simple – and stark – message of Scotland's Poverty Truth Commission. The opposite is, tragically, also true. When people who struggle against poverty are ignored, or worse still, blamed for their poverty things will only get worse.

For the last eighteen months, the Poverty Truth Commission has brought together two groups of people: some of Scotland's most influential citizens and an equal number of people who face the daily grind against poverty. We have met ten times as a full Commission as well as more frequently in small groups.

We have laughed and cried together. We have expressed fury at senseless bureaucracy and hard-hearted injustice. We have marvelled at people's ability to shine despite the problems they face, as well as their capacity for creativity and openness to new ideas. New friendships have been created – friendships which themselves demonstrate a different way of working. This is something we hope that this report demonstrates. In it we present key challenges but we also celebrate the incredible capacity of people and places that are far too often written off.

We have examined some of the biggest challenges that our nation faces: the growth of in-work poverty; the impact of welfare cuts; the stigma people in poverty experience; and the additional costs of being poor.

These were not the only areas we could have considered but, after a few meetings, they were where we chose collectively to focus our energy.

Our insights build on the work of the previous Poverty Truth Commission, including their concern for children in Kinship Care and finding positive ways to overcome violence. The growth of Foodbanks has also become an important aspect of our deliberations. Our work on the issues facing asylum seekers and refugees has just begun and we hope that this is an issue our successors will consider further.

The Poverty Truth Commission is not like many other commissions. We are not simply interested in gathering information, evidence and proposing what needs to change. Whilst we present clear challenges and call for change, we are primarily committed to being that change, seeking to demonstrate the approach and culture shift we advocate.

We are clear. Unless the people who experience poverty are able to shape the solutions, and not just be the recipients of the uninformed ideas of others, then nothing will really alter. This is about all of us. We present that simple thought as the biggest single challenge of 2014 – a year of potentially momentous significance in the history of Scotland.

'The Poverty Truth Commission is about changing hearts and minds.'

SANDRA

**Scotland's
Poverty Truth Commission
June 2014**

The Faces of Poverty in Scotland

The scale of poverty in Scotland, one of the richest countries in the world, is a scandal. Over 20% of children are growing up in poverty. The rise in the number of people visiting Foodbanks is shocking. As very low wages fail to keep pace with the cost of essentials, over half of those in poverty are also in paid work.

Behind these numbers are real people who love their families. They want and deserve a better future.

Marie told us: *'I want the opportunity to have a life – to thrive not just survive.'*

Diane says: *'Poverty to me means choices of gas and electricity or food or new shoes for kids, or taking them a walk and not having money to treat them to an ice-cream when they've been good.'*

Darren talks about have nothing to eat. 'And,' he points out, *'I would rather crawl on my hands and knees over broken glass than go to a food bank.'*

Moira says: *'I had 6 children. I am lucky to say my kids never went to bed hungry but my husband and I did ... and we were working. When I just had my kids we were not in debt but once I had the grandkids to look after I got a lot of debt. There was so much going against them. I am still trying to pay off the debts.'*

Increasingly people are being blamed for being poor. Whilst there is a huge amount of money spent seeking to tackle the symptoms of poverty, a significant proportion of it never reaches those who need it most.

People are diminished by poverty. Too many fail to reach their full potential and that struggle is passed on from generation to generation. And yet that is not the whole story. There is a story that also needs to be told of incredible courage, unfulfilled potential, dignity and determination.

'Shouldn't Scotland have overcome these issues relating to poverty by now? Shouldn't the notion of poverty be non-existent here?' GHAZALA

'Really terribly, in recent times, poverty also means that the government thinks you are an easy target, a scapegoat, worth less than everyone else and an easy target to wreak austerity havoc on.' ANDREA

'When I think of poverty in Scotland I think first of the scores of families I have known who have lived in poverty yet who have lived with dignity and courage. And then I think of the individuals who allow this poverty to continue, when we could actually eradicate it, if we had the will.' JOHN

WHO WE CHALLENGE

We challenge politicians and civic leaders to stop talking about those in poverty and to start learning with them.



The Story of the Commission

The Poverty Truth Commission brings together people whose professional lives affect those living in poverty with people actually experiencing poverty. Over the last five years it has brought together some of Scotland's best known leaders and some of our economically poorest citizens.

As a Commission we believe we cannot understand poverty, let alone address it, until those who live with its reality every day, are at the heart of the process for change. We have drawn inspiration from other Truth Commissions around the world, particularly from South Africa and the United States.



BARLANARK

The effectiveness of the Commission is based on building relationships and trust. In many cases these have developed into friendships. We seek to ensure that stereotypes are left at the door (first names only and no titles) and that we all get the same chance to participate. We take what we learn and use it in our communities and organisations to bring about change.

Timeline

March 2009

THE BEGINNING

We began when a group of people shared – with incredible passion and humour – their experiences of poverty in front of an invited audience of 400 people. At the end of that event 15 of Scotland's senior leaders committed to work with those that they had heard to tackle some of the symptoms and causes of poverty.

5

2009-2011

SCOTLAND'S FIRST POVERTY TRUTH COMMISSION

Over the next two years, the Commission focused on 3 main areas: Kinship Care; Overcoming Violence; and Challenging Stereotyping. We also learnt how to work together. In April 2012, the Commission reported on its findings and challenged 12 organisations to help to take the work forward.

2011-2012

BUILDING A LEGACY

We spent a year to ensure that those who had said that they wanted things to change were supported to do so. After a year we were encouraged to launch a new Commission with a different group of commissioners – with fresh insights and different sorts of influence.

'The Commission is unique in building bridges and promoting the idea that people living in poverty are the experts on their own lives. It's about vulnerability being given a platform.'

PATRICK

'The best thing about the Commission is the passion for wanting to make change. The Commission is united in its efforts towards making that change which is alive and progressing.'

GHAZALA

'The combination of members, and the influence that some have, allows the voices of those living in poverty to be heard in places which were never accessible before.'

ANNE-MARIE

'I have learnt that I am not alone and I have also learnt that if at first you don't succeed you try and try again until you get results.'

CAROLINE

WHO WE CHALLENGE

We challenge every organisation committed to tackling poverty to take steps to involve people experiencing poverty in shaping their approaches, priorities and policies.

2013-2014

SCOTLAND'S SECOND POVERTY TRUTH COMMISSION

Over the last 18 months, the Commission has focused on four key themes: Welfare Cuts; In-Work Poverty; the Cost of Being Poor; and the Stigma of Poverty. In June 2014 we reported on our work at Turning Up the Volume on Poverty to an invited audience of over 450 people.

2014-2016

GOING FORWARD

In June 2014, a new Commission was established to take the work forward until April 2016. Over this 21 month period, whatever the outcome of Scotland's Independence Referendum, the Poverty Truth Commission is committed to ensuring that the experiences of people living in poverty help to shape Scotland's future.

Commission Members 2012 -14

Not all our Commissioners have been able to come to every meeting – other things come up – but rarely have fewer than twenty people gathered. This is a sign of how important involvement in the Commission has been for people who live busy, complicated and difficult lives. We have all brought our own skills, experience and knowledge.



Alison Douglas

Alan Naylor

Andrea Williamson

Anne-Marie Pepper

Ayshea Khan

Blair Green

Caroline Mockford

Cath Milligan

Darren Murray

Diane McKechnie

Donna Barrowcliffe

Ghazala Hakeem

Harry Burns

Jackie Killeen

Jean Forrester

Jennifer Stoddart

Jennifer Wallace

Jim McCormick

John Downie

Linda de Caestecker

Louise Falconer

Lynn Hendry

Marie McCormack

Moira Lenehan

Patrick Boase

Sadie Prior

Sandra Carter

Tricia McConalogue

'I am able to bring the fearlessness of speaking up about issues that affect me.'

'I think I bring a bit of a bridge between people, lots of data, and mentoring to Kinship Carers.'

'I hope I bring my experience of more than forty years of working (and for many of these years also living) alongside people in poverty in Scotland. I also would hope I bring a level of personal support.'

'I think I bring a commercial acumen to the commission that adds to the framing of arguments for an external audience.'

'I bring my experiences which I can share.'

'I think I brought a health orientated approach to the commission and maybe have toppled a few pre-conceived ideas about what GPs are like, hopefully in a good way.'



'An awful lot of moans and groans and a wee bit of life experience.'

'I bring an open mind and a passion for putting what weight I have behind "minority" struggles.'

'A willingness to listen, a belief that this way of working is an approach that promotes a fairer and more just society.'

'Knowledge of the research evidence (I hope) and some contacts beyond the Poverty Truth Commission.'

WHO WE CHALLENGE

We challenge all of us to stop making judgements about people on the basis of their title and postcode.

The Cost of Being Poor

‘heat or eat’

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

People who struggle against poverty have to pay more for their food, fuel and financial services (such as credit and insurance) than those who are better off. They often lose out on potential savings and these financial penalties can trap people in long term poverty. From the perspective of the Commission, this makes no sense and must change.

As a Commission, we chose to focus on fuel poverty and financial inclusion. A number of our commissioners have had direct experience of being on very high fuel tariffs and struggling to pay bills. People who use pre-payment meters are put on a higher rate than direct debit customers and also have to pay for the upkeep of their meter.

One Commissioner describes the dilemma: *‘I have to switch off my electric in the winter as I cannot afford to put money in the meter. Three days before my giro payment it comes down to “heat or eat” as often I cannot afford to do both.’*

We were appalled that some people have to go to bed to keep warm and others cannot afford to cook food from scratch. One Commissioner, on a particularly high tariff, discovered that she was paying off a previous tenant’s debt. We are also aware of situations where people are by-passing meters by tapping in to the mains gas or electricity supply, putting their lives and the lives of others at risk.

As a Commission we believe that being able to afford to keep warm and to eat a hot meal should be seen as basic rights.



GORBALS



RIVER CLYDE



POLLOKSHIELDS

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

Over the last eighteen months we have highlighted good practice as well as pointing to failures and how things need to change. We have done so in collaboration with others.

We held a roundtable discussion with a number of social housing providers and a representative from the private housing sector to discuss ways to increase tenants' fuel efficiency.

We sought to connect with the work of Glasgow's Poverty Leadership Panel, participating in their Energy Summit, aiming to hold energy companies to account, and feeding into the Panel's work on financial inclusion.

We spoke with Glasgow City Council to seek to ensure that the voices of low income families are at the centre of the city's proposals for alternative energy schemes and a not-for profit energy company.

We want energy companies to offer pre-payment customers real choice and tariffs at the same rate as for direct debit users.

WHO WE CHALLENGE

We challenge all of us to write to our energy providers to demand proper choice and value for low income customers.

We challenge social and private landlords to work with tenants to reduce fuel poverty through more effective insulation and improved working relationships with energy providers.

We challenge government, at local authority, Scottish and UK levels, to engage meaningfully with those in poverty around developing alternative energy sources and a not-for-profit energy company.

Welfare Cuts 'breaking people's spirits'

Welfare Reform is deepening inequality in Scottish society. It is estimated that between £1.5 and £2 billion per year is being saved by tax payers as a result of changes to the benefits system in Scotland. These changes are being felt, disproportionately, by the very poorest and most vulnerable in our society. We believe that this is inherently unjust. Instead, any changes must be focused on narrowing the gap between the richest and the poorest.

Amid the myriad of changes to the current system including the Bedroom Tax, the replacement of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) with Personal Independence Payment (PIP), the introduction of the Benefits Cap and the process of implementing Universal Credit, the Commission has chosen to focus its attention on one specific issue – the dramatic increase since 2012 of sanctions being imposed on benefit claimants.

Sanctions can be imposed for a period of between 4 weeks and 3 years. Whilst some emergency help is offered, it typically takes an initial two weeks to commence. Offences can include being a few minutes late for an appointment, applying for one fewer job than you should have done, and can also be the result of bureaucratic and clerical errors

on the part of Job Centre staff. Sanctions rather than incentivising people to find work, have the opposite impact. They are breaking people's spirits and damaging their physical and mental health – the last straw for those whose cupboards are already empty.

Members of the Commission have been sanctioned and know others who have suffered a similar fate. The Commission does not dispute the need for sanctions as a last resort. However, it is clear that they are currently being disproportionately and unfairly applied. One Commissioner put it succinctly:

'You used to come out the of the Job Centre happy if you had found a job. Now you come out pleased if you haven't got a sanction.'

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

The Commission worked with Newsnight Scotland (November 2013) to highlight the issue of sanctions. We followed this up with a number of organisations as well as hosting a gathering of people who had been subject to sanctions.

We met with representatives of the Department of Work & Pensions (DWP) to highlight our concerns and to suggest practical ways in which those who had

been sanctioned can be communicated with more clearly and compassionately.

Subsequently we have continued to ensure that awareness of the damaging impact of sanctions is being raised through the influence and involvement of Commissioners at national and local level. We have encouraged faith communities to be more active on this issue and have provided opportunities for those who have been sanctioned to share their experiences.

WHO WE CHALLENGE

We challenge all of us to learn more about how sanctions are breaking people's spirits and then do something about it.

We challenge the DWP to recognise the hugely damaging impact that sanctions are having on people's mental and physical health, to alter their policy and improve their practice.



CRANHILL

In-Work Poverty

‘working every hour God sends’



GOVANHILL

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

There are now more people in Scotland living in poverty in households where at least one person is working than in homes where no-one is in paid employment. It is clear there are fundamental flaws which mean that education and employment are not providing people with a route out of poverty.

In-work poverty is complex. Key issues include: childcare is expensive and inflexible; lack of support for training and few opportunities to access additional qualifications; limited opportunities for career progression; the inflexibility of the current Benefits System; the increase in self-employment and part-time work; and the falling value of the Minimum Wage against rapidly escalating costs for food and fuel in particular. People find themselves ‘working every hour

God sends’ in an effort to pay the bills and make ends meet.

We recognise that the barriers to overcoming in-work poverty are multi-faceted and inter-related, so the Commission opted to focus on poor employment conditions, with a particular emphasis on zero-hour contracts. Current estimates suggest the use of such contracts in Scotland affects almost 120,000 workers.

Employees on zero-hour contracts are not guaranteed working hours and, as such, have no assured income. In addition, they are unlikely to get holiday entitlement and a pension contribution. Members of the Commission experiencing in-work poverty spoke frankly about the distressing effects of zero-hour contracts. Such contracts offer maximum flexibility to the employer but minimum security to the employee.

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

The Commission wrote to the Scottish and UK Governments to raise our concerns about the impact of zero-hour contracts on some of the poorest in our society. We have also advocated for the payment of the Living Wage and its inclusion within public procurement policy.

Employers obviously have a key role to play in the promotion of good employment practice. We have been encouraged by the example of a number of different employers and by the work underway through Scottish Business in the Community to raise awareness of the steps employers can take to tackle in-work poverty. We recommend the introduction of a Good Employers' Charter Mark.

The Commission is clear that we need a far greater level of flexibility for employees and not simply for employers. One practical example would be if employees had the choice of being paid weekly or monthly. This would help mitigate the potential shortfall in benefits that could arise when people move from receiving benefits weekly to monthly as Universal Credit is implemented.

The Commission is keenly aware that solutions to in-work poverty as a whole involve keeping hold of an alternative vision for the economy that sees it as the servant of people rather than the other way round.



GORBALS

WHO WE CHALLENGE

We challenge all of us to look beyond the myth that work is always a route out of poverty.

We challenge all of us to join the campaign for a Living Wage.

We challenge employers to end the bad practice of zero-hour contracts and governments to legislate against their abuse.

Stigma 'used as scapegoats'

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

Extreme financial hardship is only a part of the difficulties people living in poverty face. Much of the media, many politicians and society more broadly often stigmatise people living in poverty. Such stigma is less commonly recognised than that associated with, for example, ethnicity or mental health. Regardless of its context, stigma is unhelpful, hurtful and damaging. It diminishes people's self-worth, confidence and esteem. The Commission is appalled at the lack of moral courage of many within public life to stand alongside those who are unfairly caricatured.

Members of the Commission have experienced stigma, stereotyping and discrimination because of where they live and how much money they have. One of our Commissioners shared her experience:

'I've seen me fill in application forms and I'll put down I live in Govan. But I'm then told "No, you don't put down Govan. Write Glasgow, because if you say Govan, no-one is going to employ you." They are even saying that at the Job Centre.'



GORBALS

People who want to contribute in many positive ways to our society, the great majority of whom are already doing so, are wrongly labelled 'scroungers', 'benefit cheats' and 'undeserving.' They have been frustrated by others assuming they need sympathy. Large numbers been completely unfairly written off as 'lazy.'

The Commission is clear that we must look beyond the superficiality of the area where someone lives and whether they are in employment or in receipt of welfare benefits. We should see those experiencing poverty as partners in the struggle to overcome injustice rather than as the problem or, even worse, the enemy. The Commission is convinced real change will only occur when our society deliberately values empathy as opposed to judgement.

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

Drawing on our own experience, the Commission identified ways to raise awareness and challenge the way poverty comes to define people in the eyes of others. We know how people are wrongly perceived, the labels they have to endure and the negativity they encounter.

We recognised that all of us have experienced stigma and discrimination in a variety of different ways in our lives. Some of us, although now relatively affluent, experienced poverty in the past.

As a Commission we have drawn inspiration from how other prejudices have been addressed and the role the media has played in such campaigns around discrimination on account of mental health, ethnicity, gender and sexuality. We recognise the need for a similar long-term campaign to overcome prejudice against people who experience poverty.

As we have built friendships within the Commission, we have recognised the power of sharing one another's life experiences. We are putting together a presentation and booklet which shares some of these conversations. We hope that these will encourage others to see people and not labels.

Stigma reinforces the idea that those living in poverty are always in need of help. This is both obstructive and untrue. Those experiencing poverty face countless barriers to improving their own situation yet they possess the resilience, determination and capability to do so.

WHO WE CHALLENGE

We challenge all of us to see beyond the labels that stereotype people and which diminish our society as a whole.

We challenge politicians to avoid unfair and prejudicial language against people living in poverty.

We challenge organisations tackling poverty to engage more effectively with the media to ensure positive stories are heard.



GORBALS

Food Poverty

‘justice not charity’

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

Over the eighteen months that the Commission has been operating, perhaps one thing more than any other, highlights the growing crisis of poverty facing thousands of people in every part of Scotland – the explosion of Foodbanks and the numbers of people using them. In 2013-14, the Trussell Trust estimates that 65,000 people visited Foodbanks that they support.

The Commission is clear that there is a direct relationship between changes in welfare policy and the growth of Foodbanks. We are also clear that this increase is disgraceful and must be challenged. Foodbanks must not become an accepted way of addressing food poverty in Scotland. The issue of food poverty is one of justice, not charity.

A number of our Commissioners have been forced to use Foodbanks. They have talked powerfully of the indignity of someone else picking out the food that you get to eat; of needing to admit that you do not have a tin opener or your power supply has been cut off; of begging for a voucher; and of needing to walk for miles to get food for your family.

The Commission is aware that different models of Foodbanks exist. The ones we have seen working best are those where there are already well-established personal relationships, where people are involved in choosing what they need and where hospitality as well as food is offered. We are concerned that the referral system, used by some Foodbanks, reinforces the myth that people in poverty are seeking to get something for nothing.



GOVANHILL



GOVANHILL

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

The Commission has used its position, in the media and with a range of organisations, to challenge the acceptance of the rise of Foodbanks. Whilst expressing appreciation for those who are responding generously to the growth of food poverty, we are clear that different, longer term and more sustainable solutions are required.

We have engaged with a number of agencies and networks interested in promoting food share schemes and who are looking to develop more effective ways of looking at how food is produced locally. We have also met with funders interested in how they might most effectively respond to this crisis.

Above all we are clear that the solutions to food poverty – as with every other area of work – will be far more adequately addressed when people who experience

it are involved in working out how best to deal with it. We have provided a number of opportunities for this to happen and believe that this approach will continue to be vital.

WHO WE CHALLENGE

We challenge all of us to campaign against the injustice of food poverty alongside giving to our local Foodbank.

We challenge local authorities, as well as national governments, to develop more sustainable and fair food strategies.

We challenge all those working to address food poverty to involve those who are directly affected in developing solutions.

Challenges from the Commission

As a Commission we have been profoundly challenged by what we have learnt and shared together. It is in this spirit that we share and issue these challenges. Some are directed towards particular groups. Others are for all of us.

- **We challenge** politicians and civic leaders to stop talking about those in poverty and to start learning with them.
- **We challenge** every organisation committed to tackling poverty to take steps to involve people experiencing poverty in shaping their approaches, priorities and policies.
- **We challenge** all of us to stop making judgements about people on the basis of their title and postcode.
- **We challenge** all of us to write to our energy providers to demand proper choice and value for low income customers.
- **We challenge** social and private landlords to work with tenants to reduce fuel poverty through more effective insulation and improved working relationships with energy providers.
- **We challenge** government, at local authority, Scottish and UK levels, to engage meaningfully with those in poverty around developing alternative energy sources and a not-for-profit energy company.
- **We challenge** all of us to learn more about how sanctions are breaking people's spirits and then do something about it.
- **We challenge** the DWP to recognise the hugely damaging impact that sanctions are having on people's mental and physical health, to alter their policy and improve their practice.
- **We challenge** all of us to look beyond the myth that work is always a route out of poverty.
- **We challenge** all of us to join the campaign for a Living Wage.
- **We challenge** employers to end the bad practice of zero-hour contracts and governments to legislate against their abuse.
- **We challenge** all of us to see beyond the labels that stereotype people and which diminish our society as a whole.
- **We challenge** politicians to avoid unfair and prejudicial language against people living in poverty.
- **We challenge** organisations tackling poverty to engage more effectively with the media to ensure positive stories are heard.
- **We challenge** all of us to campaign against the injustice of food poverty alongside giving to our local Foodbank.
- **We challenge** local authorities, as well as national governments, to develop more sustainable and fair food strategies.
- **We challenge** all those working to address food poverty to involve those who are directly affected in developing solutions.

The New Commission 2014 – 16

As one group of individuals puts down the baton, we have invited another to take up the challenge. They will do so at a very significant time for Scotland.

Our new commissioners come to us with a wealth of experience from many sectors and parts of society. These include the Scottish Government, Glasgow City Council, faith communities, students and school leavers, community activists, people involved in the criminal

justice system, representatives of political parties, academics, refugees, advice services, business leaders, carers and volunteers.



Aimee Ottroh

Alison Phipps

Andrew Scott

Bob Doris

Caroline Mockford

Cath Milligan

Colin McConnell

Darren Murray

David Ramsay

Fergus McNeill

Fraser Falconer

Georgina Shields

Ghazala Hakeem

Haq Ghani

Harry Burns

Jackie Baillie

James Brown

Jim McCormick

John Chalmers

Karyn McClusky

Kourtney McMurray

Lesley Fraser

Margaret Lynch

Marie-Therese Martin

Maureen McKenna

Paul Liddell

Philip Tartaglia

Ricky Ross

Robert Gordon

Ross Finnie

Sheena Barnes

Susan McMahon

William Ledbetter

... and others to be confirmed.

Whatever the outcome of the Independence Referendum in September 2014, Scotland is going to change. The change we seek is a Scotland where all of our citizens, and particularly those who are the most disadvantaged, will play a part in shaping our future together.

Learning Together

Every week someone gets in touch asking for more information about the Poverty Truth Commission.

We work in a way which is attracting lots of interest from all over the country – and actually all over the world. We are excited to be seeing the model being taken up and adapted.

Because we are often asked about how the Commission works, we thought it would be useful to include some of the things we have learned together.

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Lose the labels... and the tables

We have found it important to work on first name terms, not to emphasise our roles and to meet in an open circle without piles of paper.

Practice hospitality... and encourage friendship

People have loved the cakes along with the mugs of tea and coffee. Deepening friendships have enriched our work more than anything else.

The importance of beginnings... and endings

Time spent at the start and conclusion of meetings hearing from everyone is not wasted. It sets the context and drives the action.

The art of facilitating... and chairing

We have focused on really good facilitation, ideally led by two people. This has encouraged depth of conversation rather than jumping to solutions.

Kids count

We have found the presence of one or two children has enriched our meetings and allowed Commissioners to attend more easily. They have brought fun and shared responsibilities.

The power of testimony

Our most transformative moments have nearly always centred on the sharing of someone's experience of struggle. It has made the problem real, encouraged empathy and created tangible passion for change.

Getting people there

Do not under-estimate just how much work is involved in supporting people to be involved and in getting to meetings. It takes lots of phone calls, text messages, emails, facebook invites, paying expenses in advance and care.

People need support

For those who are not used to meetings, additional encouragement and background planning is required.

SOME BIGGER ISSUES

Causes... and symptoms

The causes of poverty are structural and systemic. At the same time, making a practical difference is really important. Address the big issue and identify small ways to make a difference.

Set out to over deliver... and under promise

This is long term work and things will not change overnight. From the outset we need to be honest about that.

Focus on strengths... and not weaknesses

Try to find the people struggling against poverty who are already changing things. Join in and learn together.

Celebrate disagreement... and build consensus

We learn most when we listen to those that we disagree with. Don't shy away from different points of view and don't just agree to differ.

Poverty of participation

Poverty has many faces and dimensions. One vital component is that too many people believe that they don't matter. If we can change one thing, it should be that.



Acknowledgements

Thanks to Billy Cullen for lots of the photographs – they show how brilliant people and communities are. Thanks to Scott Wallace for design, creativity and patience. Thanks to an incredibly talented team of volunteers and staff. Thanks to all the people, including our funders, who've made it possible. Thanks, above all, to all our Commissioners.



THE
Poverty Truth
Commission



The Poverty Truth Commission, 759a Argyle Street, Glasgow G3 8DS
Phone: 0141 248 2911 Email: info@povertytruthcommission.org
www.povertytruthcommission.org