

ANNUAL REPORT

2019-2020

WORKING TOGETHER
TO COMBAT POVERTY
IN SCOTLAND

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'How well is Universal Credit
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CONVENOR'S REPORT

It has been a privilege to convene the Poverty Alliance board for the last four years. Over these years there have been significant opportunities to take steps towards realising the Alliance's vision of a Scotland with 'dignity and social and economic justice for all.' As my time as Convenor comes to an end, it is important to reflect on where we have made progress as a network and how we meet the challenges that lie ahead.

Our primary strategic objective is to promote social justice and combat poverty in Scotland through influencing policy and practice. Over the last four years we have consistently seen the Poverty Alliance address some of the most important issues that we face and begin to make real progress. In the legislative arena we have played an important role in helping to shape key pieces of legislation such as the Social Security (Scotland) Act, the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act, and have fed into the development of the Poverty and Inequality Commission, the Fair Work Action Plan, the National Transport Strategy amongst many others. Of course, many civil society organisations have played a role in shaping these legislative processes. What the Poverty Alliance adds is the concerns of those living on low incomes and the experiences of grassroots organisations.

The development of our Get Heard Scotland programme has added to our efforts to put these voices and experiences at the heart of policy to reduce child poverty, and the root causes of poverty, at the local and national levels. By working to ensure that these voices are genuinely taken into account we are seeking to put dignity at the heart of policy making processes. There is still some way for us to go in this work, but Get Heard Scotland points to how we can make policy making more inclusive and dignified for those who stand to be the most direct beneficiaries.

We have also seen real progress over the last four years in helping to shape practice change that will contribute 'to social and economic justice for all.' Perhaps most impactful is our work on the real Living Wage. Many milestones have been passed in this work over the last six years, but none are more important than the estimated £180m of increased wages that have been received by low paid workers. As we move towards 2,000 accredited Living Wage employers in Scotland the Poverty Alliance is rightly look at how we can have an even greater impact, ensuring that more workers receive at least the Living Wage.

We've also sought to change practice through programmes like our Poverty Awareness Training or the 'A Menu for Change' project, the latter of which was delivered in partnership with Oxfam Scotland, CPAG and Nourish Scotland. These projects have allowed us to look at the complex challenges that those on the frontline, both in the public and voluntary sectors, face in addressing poverty. As we face the prospect of even more people being pulled into poverty in the coming years, it will become all the more important that the Poverty Alliance continues to share and promote those models of best practice that will lead to real changes for individuals.



In recent years we have seen some reported improvements in public attitudes towards poverty and the need to address social injustice. Our work around reframing the poverty narrative, particularly the development of our Challenge Poverty Week initiative, has demonstrated the need for consistent and long-term approaches to changing the way we talk about poverty. Whilst 2019 saw the largest Challenge Poverty Week so far, as well as the development of the idea in London and elsewhere in the England and Wales, we need to be clear that this work will be even more needed in the years to come.

As I prepare to step down from the Convenors role and reflect on the last four years, there has been clearly significant progress in our work as an organisation and our strength as a network. We are going to need this strength in the years to come as we face greater challenges than ever before. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a swift and seismic impact, with people already living in poverty and experiencing multiple inequalities being hardest hit. The country is facing unprecedented economic hardship, leaving even more people in need of an adequate and dignified Social Security system, fair work, and an economy that works for all. Now, more than ever, our work tackling poverty and injustice will be absolutely crucial to ensure that no one is ever left behind. Our growing network will need to come together, share and learn together, and redouble our efforts to help deliver on our vision of social and economic justice for all.

Anela Anwar

Convenor



DIRECTOR'S INTRODUCTION

Amid the coronavirus pandemic it is difficult to look back to 2019 and review the work of the Poverty Alliance. So much is different now, the challenges we now face as individuals, communities and as a network of anti-poverty organisations feel completely transformed. However, as our members know only too well, many of the problems that the Poverty Alliance exists to challenge are precisely the ones that have made the impact of coronavirus worse than it should have been. As one of our leading members, the Glasgow Disability Alliance, has highlighted, the coronavirus has supercharged existing inequalities.

We have seen the weaknesses of the social security system exposed, with some emergency help needed to make sure that the system could cope. But it was not only the social security system where inadequacies were exposed.

Our labour market leaves some groups of workers in precarious positions, due to a combination of low pay, unstable hours, inflexible conditions and a lack of legal protection. During the pandemic we have seen time and again that it is essential low paid workers, often women, who have been on the frontline of efforts to keep us all safe, well and provided for.

Looking back, we see where civil society has been at the forefront of responses to many of the social impacts of lockdown. Our members told us about efforts to distribute emergency food, or to provide social connection to those who were isolated and to give advice to those whose income had been cut. We have seen connections strengthen between those delivering statutory services and those in the voluntary sector, but we have also seen examples of where the gaps in provision have made life harder for many.

Our work in 2019–20 may seem as though from a different time, and something disconnected from our shared concerns now, as we protect ourselves against the social, economic and health consequences of the pandemic. But in reality, our focus has been on those issues that have been critical in determining how we coped with the pandemic.

We have maintained a focus on social security, both on those parts delivered by Westminster and by Holyrood, producing new research on Universal Credit and campaigning for the use of new Scottish powers on social security.

Our work on low pay has helped ensure that more than 40,000 workers received a pay rise when their employer became an accredited Living Wage organisation. We have also demonstrated the importance of putting the voices and experience of people living on low incomes at the heart of solutions to poverty through our Get Heard Scotland programme and through our work with the Edinburgh Poverty Commission.



Challenge Poverty Week in 2019, the biggest yet with more than 350 organisations involved, highlighted what can be done to address poverty right now. It also demonstrated how we can begin to change the narrative around poverty, changes that make the likelihood of securing positive policy change in the future more likely.

As we live through the impact of coronavirus we know that we will need to strengthen our work to meet the challenges of the future. We now confront challenges around poverty and inequality that are bigger than at any time in our near 30-year history.

However, we are confident that we can draw on that history and the expertise of our members to help secure real change. In making real change our member organisations are central. Delivering on our shared ambitions falls on a day to day basis to our staff team. I would like to thank all of them for working hard to help us make a real impact, and say a particular thanks to those who have left us in 2019–20 – Anna Ballie, Irene Tortajada, and Lesley Sherwood, Admin Assistant. A special mention for our Admin and Finance Manager, Poe McHugh, who completed 20 years at the Alliance. She's played a key role in strengthening the organisation over those years.

Finally, I would like to thank Anela Anwar, the outgoing Convenor of the Board of the Alliance. She has provided fantastic leadership to our board over the last four years, helping the board shape the direction of our network over a crucial period. I would like to personally thank her for the commitment she has shown over the years, and for the support she has given to the staff team as we have grown. She will be greatly missed, but she is leaving knowing that the Poverty Alliance is in a good position to take on the challenges that lie ahead.

Peter Kelly
Director

KEY ACTIVITIES

In 2019–20 we focused our activity in five areas that would help us fulfil our objectives. These five areas of activity were:

1. To support the development of policy and practice which promote social justice and combat poverty;
2. To work with people and communities to help them challenge poverty;
3. To work with organisations to build a strong anti-poverty network in Scotland;
4. To raise awareness, encourage debate and encourage action on poverty; and
5. To provide high quality research and knowledge about poverty in Scotland

A wide range of activities are carried out by the staff team with our members and many others in each of these areas.



INFLUENCING POLICY AND PRACTICE

In previous years we have worked with others across civil society to ensure that there was a strong legislative context for addressing poverty. A focus of our policy work has been to continue to follow up the opportunities created by the legislative context. Central to this context is the Child Poverty Act, which with stretching poverty reduction targets has become a focus of activity. As reported last year we have worked with civil society organisations and with the Scottish Government to contribute to the delivery of the commitment around a new Income Supplement. The announcement of the new Scottish Child Payment in summer of 2019 was a significant step forward in the fight against poverty in Scotland. The Poverty Alliance played an important role in ensuring that this important commitment was delivered.

During 2019–20 we also continued to build on our work to carry out targeted engagement with local authorities as part of the Get Heard Scotland project. This work is focused around the development of Local Child Poverty Action Reports, and this year was focused on working in Highland, North Ayrshire and Midlothian. This work is described in more detail below, but it is important to note that this 'local' policy and influencing work also contributes significantly to our efforts to influence national policy. Our engagement through Get Heard has continued to provide evidence for our contributions to discussions on national transport strategy. We have met with the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity as part of our work around Get Heard and transport issues.



INFLUENCING POLICY AND PRACTICE



As part of our influencing work last year we produced a manifesto for the snap general election in December 2019. This gave us an opportunity to highlight areas of critical importance to the fights against poverty at the UK level. This included having a UK anti-poverty strategy, ending the 5 week wait for Universal Credit, ending the benefit cap and 2 child limit, tackling precarious work and improving the right to access genuinely flexible work. We also highlighted the potential impact of Brexit on poverty in Scotland, calling on the UK Government to release information on the assessment of this impact. This was work that was cited in Prime Minister's Questions at Westminster.

There are a variety of other areas where we seek to influence policy and practice on an ongoing basis: we are active members of the Scottish Fuel Poverty Panel and are also active in the Carnegie UK Trust's Affordable Credit Action Group. Both represent important areas of work where we can develop approaches to reducing the cost of living, complementing our efforts to boost incomes.

Whilst much of our policy and influencing work focuses on the social security system and public services that support people living on low incomes, we also continue to have a significant focus on issues of in-work poverty. Our work on the Living Wage Scotland initiative has continued to go from strength to strength. We added more than 400 employers in Scotland to those accredited as paying the real Living Wage. This meant that an estimated 4000 workers received a pay increase as a direct result of accreditation. As a result of our work Scotland has a higher proportion of Living Wage accredited employers than any other part of the UK. It is no coincidence that Scotland now also has the lowest proportion of workers paid less than the real Living Wage. Our work in this area has also helped to ensure that payment of the real Living Wage remains at the heart of the Scottish Government's approach to fair work.

In addition to adding to the number of accredited Living Wage employers, we have also continued to develop activity in other areas that will help make a difference to in-work poverty. We are continuing to work with the Living Wage Foundation to develop the 'Living Hours' initiative, aimed at providing greater security of hours and contracts. We expect to do more work in this area in 2020–21. We have also continued to develop the 'Making Living Wage Places' initiative, with Glenrothes becoming the first Living Wage town in Scotland.

The problem of food insecurity has been growing for several years now. Whilst the best and most direct way to address the problem of food insecurity is to ensure that everyone has access to an adequate income, we also know that there is much that can be done to ensure that individuals are able to access all the support that is available and that emergency food is delivered with dignity. Since 2017 we have been working with Oxfam Scotland, Nourish Scotland and CPAG on the 'Menu for Change' project, that sought to reduce reliance on foodbanks by improving local systems.

This project came to an end in February 2020 after delivering a range of research outputs, campaigning actions and making a real impact on the approaches of policy makers at local and national levels, as well as on the practice of many food banks. Despite the completion of the project there is still a great deal of work to be carried out in this area, with continually increasing demand for emergency food aid. We will continue to work with food banks in our membership as well as with organisations such as the Trussell Trust to develop long term sustainable responses to food insecurity.

WORKING WITH PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

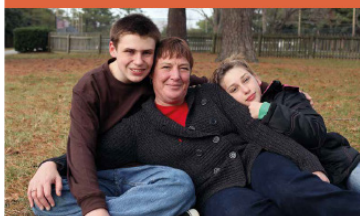
Our work with community organisations and with people experiencing poverty has once again been focused around our Get Heard Scotland programme. In the last year more than 200 people took part in 37 community discussion in Highland, North Ayrshire and Midlothian. The discussions that took place covered a wide range of areas, from social security to transport, health care to child poverty action reports in the three local authority areas, as well as sharing the findings with the Scottish Government. This work has also led to direct engagement of people with experience of poverty with the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government.

Our Community Activist Advisory Group (CAAG) remains central to our work with people with direct experience of poverty. We have sought to provide greater levels of support for the group to be involved in media work and other activity to help them share their experiences. As well as media and framing training, we have also helped to provide public speaking opportunities, including addressing the Poverty Alliance annual conference alongside the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government. We will continue to expand and develop this group in the year ahead.

Our research activity is an increasingly important way for us to directly engage with people experiencing poverty. Two examples were our work to support the development of the Edinburgh Poverty Commission and a piece of research to produce guidance on engagement for the Poverty and Inequality Commission (PIC). The work in Edinburgh carried out qualitative research into poverty in the city, but also held a series of hearings with people in poverty. This work is now completed, but we aim to continue to support individuals to maintain their engagement with policy makers in Edinburgh. We were commissioned by the PIC to produce guidance on how they should engage with people with experience of poverty in their work. As part of this research we formed a group of people with experience who provided detailed feedback and input into the work. This guidance will be published in 2020.



OUR LIVES, OUR SOLUTIONS:
THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE
GET HEARD SCOTLAND PROJECT 2019/2020





AWARENESS RAISING

We have continued to produce a wide range of publications, including the Scottish Anti-Poverty Review, leaflets, briefing sheets. We also produced a number of parliamentary briefings and evidence papers on a wide range of issues including child poverty, transport and fuel poverty. A comprehensive manifesto for the UK elections, 'Righting the Wrongs', was also produced. It contained a wide range of actions under the themes of anti-poverty strategy, social security, employment and Brexit.

Challenge Poverty Week has continued to go from strength to strength and is now central to much of our awareness raising work. We have been organising the Week since 2013 but the activity in 2019 represented the biggest year so far. We more than doubled the number of organisations taking part to more than 360, who together delivered more than 450 actions. We were particularly pleased to see most local authorities in Scotland take part in the week this year, with a wide range of activities taking place in schools across the country. We secured more than 40 pieces of media coverage in 'top-tier' national outlets over the course of the week.

A crucial dimension of the Week that was significantly strengthened this year was the training component of the activity, as mentioned above. This training is vital if we are to begin to change the way we talk about poverty. Through this work we are able to begin to shift the way that key organisations talk about poverty throughout the year, not just during Challenge Poverty Week. We are grateful to the support that the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has provided to help develop Challenge Poverty Week and are delighted that they have agreed to support the initiative for a three year period.

Over the last year we have continued to play an active role in both the Scottish Campaign on Rights to Social Security and the End Child Poverty campaign. These have been important and targeted campaigns that have kept up pressure in important areas of policy development in Scotland.

NETWORKING & TRAINING

We have continued to strengthen our approach to networking over the last year. We have sought ways to ensure that our members are effectively involved in our policy and practice work, our community engagement activity, or our campaigning work.

A very wide range of events took place last year that helped to build our network. We held a number of members meetings to allow closer engagement with our work over the last year. In these meetings we discussed a range of issues on topics such as the Scottish Child Payment, Basic Services, the economy. These meetings were a very successful way of networking for members, as well as providing important feedback on the development of the Poverty Alliance's work.

We also organised a range of other events during the year including awareness raising seminars for our Get Heard Scotland programme in Inverness, Livingston and Irvine, hearing as part of the work on the Edinburgh Poverty Commission, as well as events at party political conferences and an awards event as part of Living Wage Week.

As part of the development of Challenge Poverty Week, we built on the success of our training in 2018. In the last year more than 70 organisations took part in media training as part of our work on developing CPW, and we also provided intensive 1-2-1 training and support for people with experience of poverty as part of the Week. This training helps to ensure that re-framed messages on poverty are used by organisations throughout the year, not just during CPW.





RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE

Using high quality evidence – qualitative, quantitative and participatory – to make the case for the policy and practice change we need is a vital area of our work. As outlined above, our Get Heard Scotland is one way for us to gather important information on the lived experience of poverty. However, we also recognise the need to develop a range of research projects to provide the evidence needed to make change. The last year saw us develop new projects and complete longstanding pieces of work.

The research element of our Menu for Change project concluded in 2019 with the launch of the report 'Found Wanting: Understanding journeys into and out of food insecurity' in October. This publication drew on in depth, longitudinal approach to understand experiences of food insecurity. We have used this evidence extensively in our policy responses and in discussions with policy makers. The evidence has already been used to feed into policy responses. The issue of food insecurity has unfortunately not diminished, and we expect that we will return to the issue in the years ahead.

The Edinburgh Poverty Commission was established in early 2019. We were contracted to deliver a range of research activities for the Commission to help contribute to its thinking and evidence base. This research involved a range of interviews with people living on low incomes in the city and well as hearings with people living in poverty and members of the Commission. We also worked with Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit (SPIRU) at Glasgow Caledonian University on a separate research project looking at public attitudes to poverty for the Edinburgh Poverty Commission.



RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE

We have continued to carry out research work in Fife in partnership with colleagues at Fife Gingerbread in 2019–20. We have continued our support of the evaluation of the Making it Work employability project. This is a partnership project involving four agencies, Fife Gingerbread, Clued Up, Citizen Advice Rights Fife and Supported Employment Service (SES) and will be completed in 2021. In addition to this work, we also completed a small scale study with Fife Gingerbread into the impact of Flexible Educational Arrangements. This research explored the challenges for education services managing part-time timetables for young people receiving additional levels of support, the experiences of young people on part-time timetables and the impacts on their families involved tracking households across the project experiencing an intervention as well as reflections from practitioners across the respective agencies.

Our research on the roll out of full-service Universal Credit in Glasgow, delivered in partnership with Professor Sharon Wright and colleagues at the University of Glasgow, was completed in the last year. This study highlighted the ongoing problems created by the five-week waiting period, the lack of awareness of the availability of the Scottish Welfare Fund and the impact of high caseloads on DWP staff. This research, which was funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, has provided useful insights and has already been used to inform our policy work at Scottish and UK levels.

Finally, our participatory research project in partnership with the Scottish Centre for Community Development (SCDC) was launched in 2019.

This project will support community-led action research and is jointly funded by Scottish Government and The National Lottery Community Fund. The two-year programme will support six community organisations to develop their own evidence to influence change and to take forward actions for improvement. The research evidence generated by the community organisations will be brought together through a new website and used to help shape policy at a national level across Scotland.



FINANCE REPORT

The Poverty Alliance's financial position has been stable over the last year. We were at the mid-point of three year funding agreements for our both core grant from the Scottish Government (for Get Heard Scotland) and for the support we receive for the Living Wage Scotland (LWS) programme from Scottish Government. Both these programmes provide significant security for the organisation. Our income from the LWS programme also allows greater flexibility in the development of other activities and to support the wider work of the Poverty Alliance.

As in previous years we have been successful in identifying additional support for the work of the Alliance. Our work on food insecurity, the Menu for Change Project, was funded by the Big Lottery Fund via Oxfam Scotland and came to an end in early 2020. We have continued to develop our research activity, and it provides an important source of income as well as an additional dimension to our community engagement activity. We were funded this year with grants from Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Scottish Government (Poverty and Inequality Commission) and Edinburgh City Council (Edinburgh Poverty Commission). We have also further strengthened our campaigns activity through an increased grant from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to support additional activity on Challenge Poverty Week.

As we entered the new financial year in 2020 there was considerable uncertainty regarding the future of a range of funding sources. We can expect this uncertainty to continue in the future and it will be critical that our new strategic plan will support the long term financial viability into the future. We will seek to identify additional sources of funding to support all aspects of the Poverty Alliance's work, but particularly our policy and campaigns activity, our administrative functions and our research work. As always, we thank all of our funders, particularly the Scottish Government for its long term funding, for their support.

Income	2019-20	2018-19
Donations	1,019	1,411
Charitable activities	908,605	746,422
Other trading activities	47,339	37,325
Other income	80	77
Total	957,043	785,235

Expenditure		
Charitable activities	854,527	774,821
Total	854,527	774,821
Net movements in funds	102,516	10,414
Balance brought forward	301,235	290,821
Balance carried forward	403,751	301,235

STAFF AND BOARD, APRIL 2019 - MARCH 2020

BOARD MEMBERS

Anela Anwar, Oxfam Scotland (Convenor)
Hugh Foy, Xaverian Missionaries UK Province
(Vice – Convenor)
John Dickie, Child Poverty Action Group Scotland
Irena Paterson, Moray Disability Forum
Mary McLean, Western Isles Health Partnership
Dave Moxham, Scottish Trades Union Congress
David Liddell, Scottish Drugs Forum
Marie Ward, Cranhill Development Trust
Jimmy Wilson, FARE Scotland
Eilidh Dickson, Engender
Fiona Garven, Scottish Community Development Centre
(co-opted)
Rachel McEwen, Scottish & Southern Electricity Ltd
(co-opted)
Emma Richardson, (co-opted)
Susan Lyons, Community Activist Advisory Group
(co-opted)
Bill Scott, Inclusion Scotland (until 26 July 2019)
Nuala Watt, Community Activist Advisory Group
(co-opted) (until 11 October 2019)

STAFF TEAM

Peter Kelly, Director
Robin Tennant, Fieldwork Manager
Twimukye Mushaka, Senior Fieldwork Development Officer
Neil Cowan, Policy and Parliamentary Officer
Frances Rayner, Communications Officer (p-t)
Irene Tortajada, Campaigns Officer (p-t)
(from 17 June until 6 December 2019)
Suzi Murning, Campaigns Officer (p-t) (from 24 February 2020)
Fiona McHardy, Research and Information Manager
Laura Robertson, Research Officer
Anna Baillie, Project Officer (until 12 July 2019)
Eddie Dunlop, Project Officer (August 2019 - February 2020)
Julie McGahan, Living Wage Scotland Manager (p-t)
(until 31 July 2019)
Jack Evans, Living Wage Scotland Manager
Lynn Anderson, Living Wage Places National
Co-ordinator
Christine McCaig, Living Wage Accreditation Officer
Iain Russell, Living Wage Accreditation Officer
Rachel Morrison, Living Wage Accreditation Officer
Pauline Coulter, Living Wage Accreditation Officer
(from 23 March 2020)
Anna Hirvonen, Living Wage Scotland Project Assistant
(from 24 September 2019)
Patricia Di-Tommaso, Living Wage Scotland Project Assistant
(p-t)
Poe McHugh, Administration and Finance Manager
Lesley Sherwood, Administrative Assistant (p-t)
(until 27 March 2020)
Jiyoung Kim, Administrative Assistant (until 8 November 2019)



WORKING TOGETHER TO COMBAT POVERTY

3rd Floor, 94 Hope Street, Glasgow, G2 6PH
Tel: (00) 141 353 0440 Email: admin@povertyalliance.org
www.povertyalliance.org

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