

# **BUILDING OUR MOVEMENT**

## **POVERTY ALLIANCE STRATEGY 2023-28**



# INTRODUCTION

For more than 30 years the Poverty Alliance has campaigned for the changes needed to bring about an end to poverty. The unprecedented events of the last few years, the covid pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, have not only brutally exposed the impact of poverty and inequality in Scotland, but has reminded us that the need for a strong network of organisations, working together to bring about change, has never been greater.

Time and again we saw how the existence of significant levels of poverty made worse the impact of the pandemic. Whether it is in the accessibility or value of support on offer from our social security system, the precarious and undervalued nature of so many essential jobs, or the fragility of vital public services, the structure of our society has exposed those living on low incomes to greater risk. These were issues that predated the pandemic, but what was made clearer as a result of the experience of that crisis was the depth of poverty that many experienced and the breadth of the precarity that many more felt.

## **It doesn't need to be this way.**

The experience of our network in recent years has reinforced three key lessons: change in our society is urgently required to address the poverty and inequality that scar so many lives; we have the resources, know-how and capability to make the required changes when it is necessary; and the political [and public] will to make and sustain real change is too often lacking.

This strategy is intended to help our network make a bigger impact on these issues in the years to come.

Our vision of a Scotland free from poverty is achievable, but only if we work together. Even in the grip of austerity, a public health crisis or rising prices, tangible social progress has been achieved when we worked together. But to achieve more means strengthening our network of civil society organisations across Scotland. It means acting alongside those who experience the injustice of poverty every day. We need to reach out to those in the private and public sectors who want and can bring about change.

Our strategy will help us to focus on those issues that matter most, that have the potential to make the biggest impact on the causes of poverty. We know the challenge is great, but with your help we can meet it.

## OUR VISION

**A SCOTLAND FREE OF POVERTY, WITH SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE FOR ALL, WHERE EVERYONE CAN FLOURISH AND IS TREATED WITH DIGNITY.**



## OUR PURPOSE

**TO SUPPORT THE PREVENTION AND REDUCTION OF POVERTY BY BUILDING A STRONG NETWORK OF ORGANISATIONS AND PEOPLE TO INFLUENCE POLICY AND CHANGE PRACTICE.**

## WHO WE ARE

The Poverty Alliance is the national anti-poverty network in Scotland. We are a membership organisation made up of civil society organisations from across Scotland. They include grassroots community and voluntary organisations, national organisations, campaign groups, trades unions, faith groups, university and colleges, research organisations. Public bodies, statutory organisations and commercial organisations are part of our network as associate members.

We are governed by a board of directors which is elected from our membership. All full members are entitled to nominate representatives to our board. The board is responsible for setting the direction of the organisation and ensuring that our activities are contributing to achieving our agreed outcomes.

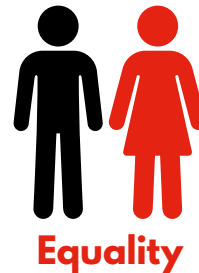
We work with and alongside people with direct experience of poverty. We seek to involve people with diverse experiences of poverty in all aspects of our work, including in the governance of our organisation.

Our network also involves a growing number of individual supporters who align with our vision and values.

We are supported financially through a range of sources: charitable trusts and foundations, Scottish Government, membership fees and earned income. Details of current sources of income can be found in our annual reports.

# OUR VALUES

The values of the Poverty Alliance underpin all our activities. They drive the shared approach to tackling poverty, expressing how we behave when delivering social change. Our values should be reflected by all those working for the Poverty Alliance and are values we expect our members to support.



It is essential to recognise the equal worth of all people. Poverty is a denial of that equal worth. We will work in ways and support policies that secure greater equality.



We will act compassionately. This means empathising with people affected by poverty, listening to and acting on the concerns of those we work with, not judging. We place kindness, dignity, respect and love at the heart of our work.



We recognise that some groups of people are at greater risk of poverty. We will ensure that our work reflects and responds to the diverse experiences of people and communities facing poverty.



Whilst we act compassionately, we do so in ways that seek to secure social, economic and environmental justice. Our focus on justice means that we aim to address imbalances not only of resources, but of power.



We believe that people who have experience of low income have the right to contribute to the solutions to poverty. We put participation into practice in our work by ensuring that time and resources are available to allow meaningful engagement in our activities.

# OUR PRINCIPLES

Alongside a set of values that underpin the way that Poverty Alliance operates we have developed a set of principles that support the delivery of these values in practice. These principles guide our approach to how we operate, develop and evaluate the work of our organisation.



## Impactful

Our work is about achieving tangible social change. We will strive to ensure that all our activity leads to real changes for people, communities and systems. We will monitor and evaluate our work to ensure that we are achieving meaningful impact.



## Accountable

We are a membership organisation and are primarily responsible to our members for the actions we take. We will be transparent and open in the way we work and will be accountable for the way we use our resources.



## Rights Based

We believe that the existence of poverty represents a breach of fundamental human rights. We take a rights-based approach to our work, placing our concerns within the wider framework of human rights, and of economic, social, and cultural rights.



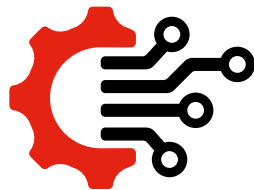
## Collaborative

No single organisation, sector or group holds the solution to poverty. Sustainable solutions are more likely to arise through collaborative approaches between different groups and will always seek to expand and deepen our engagements with a range of people and organisations.

# THE CHALLENGES WE FACE

**Poverty is a long-standing problem. It is deeply ingrained in the nature and operation of our society and economy. However, it is also a dynamic and changing problem – the nature of the challenges we face in relation poverty now are different in many ways to those that we faced in the past. There are undoubtedly areas of concern that remain consistent over time, but the problems that arise and how they impact on people and communities can be very different.**

The way our **economy** functions and operates is at the heart of many of the problems of poverty in Scotland and across the UK. In recent decades we have seen continued change in our economy, particularly the growth of the service sector, the marginalisation of manufacturing, and the increasing importance of information technology. These changes have had direct impacts on the way our labour market works and how it is regulated, with more people facing insecurity and uncertainty in relation to paid work. For more than a decade now real wages have stagnated, and despite improvements in the national minimum wage and the adoption of the voluntary real Living Wage, hundreds of thousands remain in low paid employment. This experience particularly impacts women, disabled people and workers from Black and ethnic minority communities.



If a changing economy has led to new pressures on individuals, one of our key means of supporting people through change, our **social**



**security system**, has also undergone dramatic change. Successive waves of reform to social security over more than 30 years has resulted in a system that provides many people with minimal levels of financial support, dignity and respect. Any solution to poverty must include rebuilding our social security system in a way that responds to the needs of the 21st century.

Poverty and issues of social and economic inequality cannot be separated from questions of **climate change**. We have long understood that the impact of climate change will be felt most keenly by those on the lowest incomes. However, as the climate emergency has intensified, it has become far more apparent that if we are to effectively address poverty then we must do so in the context of our changing climate. From tackling fuel poverty to food security and ensuring that the transition to a green economy is fair, we must ensure that our efforts to address poverty are part of the shift to net zero.



## Poverty is a long-standing problem. It is deeply ingrained in the nature and operation of our society and economy

Those organisations that are at the heart of the fight against poverty, what we refer to as **civil society**, are also facing unprecedented challenges. Grassroots community organisations, who provide vital support to people and communities facing poverty, are stretched farther than ever. Larger third sector organisations are increasingly dependent on contracts and income from service delivery to survive. Funding and fundraising have become increasingly difficult for organisations of all sizes. This context means there is a greater need than ever for groups and organisations across civil society to work together to achieve change.



The tools that we use to address poverty have undergone change over the last decade. Policies driven by austerity and privatisation have had a significant impact on the provision of **public services**, services that people on low incomes often rely on. Transport, health, education, care are all vital to tackling and preventing poverty. Many services that are vital to wellbeing are predominately provided through the market, for example, digital, food, housing, financial services. Addressing poverty will require us to make changes in the way we invest and support our public services, as well as asking questions about the role of private provision of public goods.



## OUR ROLE

# THE POVERTY ALLIANCE'S APPROACH TO MAKING CHANGE

**Poverty is the result of a set of complex, interlocking economic, social, legal and cultural structures and processes. These structures and processes result in, amongst many other things, low pay and insecure employment, inadequate social security payments and a system based too often on stigma, suspicion and threat; under resourced public services that struggle to meet rising demand; and housing options that are often costly and sometimes non-existent. These systems reinforce beliefs and norms that lead to the exclusion, discrimination and stigmatisation of people who live on low incomes. In addition, these systems result in poverty having a disproportionate impact on some groups – including, but not limited to, women, disabled people, people from Black and ethnic minority communities, carers and young people.**

To address poverty means changing these systems. This requires taking a 'systems change' approach. This means focusing our efforts on making long term change to the ways that the structures of our society operate and to processes that make those structures work in ways that both cause and reinforce poverty. These processes include national and local policy development, policies guiding organisations, relationships between groups, individuals and institutions, the allocation of resources, concentrations of power and the values that permeate systems. We recognise that these systems are underlain by inequalities not only of wealth and income, but of power too.

The Poverty Alliance contributes to changing systems that create and sustain poverty by focusing on key areas of policy and practice where we believe creating change will lead to long-term and permanent reductions in poverty. More specifically our contribution to changing policy and practice, as a network of civil society organisations, relates to how we bring together organisations to share knowledge, to act in solidarity with one another, to advocate and lobby together, and to further develop the capacity and ability of people who have direct experience of poverty to be part of a movement for change.



**Poverty is the result of a set of complex, interlocking economic, social, legal and cultural structures and processes**

Crucial to our contribution to system change is putting the experience and knowledge of those directly experiencing poverty at the heart of our efforts.

That role, of convening and amplifying our members voices, is our particular role as a network of organisations and individuals seeking to end poverty. At different times this will include people with direct experience of poverty, community groups, policy makers at local and national levels, voluntary organisations, academics and researchers, private sector organisations and companies, activists and campaigners.

More specifically, there are a range of activities that we will undertake, working with some of the stakeholders and partners identified above, to bring about change:



# OUTCOMES

## THE CHANGE WE WANT TO SEE IN FIVE YEARS

The outcomes we have identified are ones that are central to making progress on addressing poverty. Under each outcome we have highlighted some of the approaches that we will deploy over the coming period to secure the changes we need. The Board and staff team will keep these strategies under review, amending and changing direction when required.

1

### **Social security provides a more reliable source of adequate income**

#### **What we will do:**

- **Adequate Incomes:** We will work with others to secure increases to the value of key Scottish and UK social security benefits
- **Public Support:** We will build support for a social security system based on values of compassion and justice
- **Participation:** We will ensure that more people with experience of poverty have opportunities to directly influence the development of social security policy

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### **More jobs that reduce in-work poverty**

#### **What we will do:**

- **Building the Living Wage Movement:** We will increase the number of workers paid at least the real Living Wage
- **Fair work:** We will expand the number of employers supporting fair work practices, including Living Hours and Living Pensions
- **Just Transition:** We will support and advocate for developments and initiatives that support a Just Transition to a green economy

3

## Services more effectively help to reduce and prevent poverty

### What we will do:

- **Basic Services:** We will work to increase public and political support for the development of universal basic services
- **More Participation:** We will seek opportunities to actively involve people with experience of poverty in the development of key services (e.g. care, transport, education, health)
- **Poverty premium:** More services (e.g. financial services, energy, digital) will be affordable to people on low incomes

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## More organisations & individuals collaborate to address poverty

### What we will do:

- **Stronger Network:** More organisations across civil society in Scotland work together to address poverty
- **Better Participation:** People with experience of poverty are involved in advocating for change at local and national levels
- **Changing Minds:** Increased public understanding of the nature of poverty and support for action to address the drivers of poverty

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## We maintain a healthy organisation equipped to bring about change

### What we will do:

- **Financially secure:** We will diversify and strengthen our sources of income, developing new sources of unrestricted and project income
- **Build our Team:** We will continue to develop our policy and resources to attract, develop, support and retain a committed and diverse team
- **Stronger systems:** We will continue to enhance our systems to ensure that we manage technology and data to the highest standards, and to provide the best service to our members and supporters



the  
**POVERTY  
ALLIANCE**

WORKING TOGETHER TO COMBAT POVERTY

## GETTING INVOLVED

**If you share our vision and values, if you want to help work towards a fairer, poverty free Scotland, then join us. By joining the Poverty Alliance, you will be supporting our work to make change now and to tackle roots of poverty. You also help to build the solidarity and collaboration need to turn our vision into reality.**

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The Poverty Alliance is recognised as a charity by the Inland Revenue. Reference No: SCO19926