

The Poverty Alliance Annual Conference: Making Change Happen



Briefings from The Poverty Alliance Conference 2024

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The Poverty Alliance Annual Conference: Making Change Happen

1. Introduction

Campaigning is central to the anti-poverty movement. Across civil society, organisations lead vital campaigns, from wide ranging efforts that led to the introduction of the Scottish Child Payment; to pushing for fair and sustainable third sector funding; from locally-based movements for Better Buses; and national campaigning on better taxation. Alongside these focused campaigns, every year over 400 organisations come together to raise their voice against poverty during Challenge Poverty Week.

The anti-poverty movement is approaching a critical period for action. Despite welcome rhetoric from the Scottish Government, we are not currently on track to meet our child poverty targets, and the new UK Government have taken office at a time when data shows a trend for deepening poverty across the UK. The voice of civil society organisations in pushing for the changes needed to end the injustice of poverty is more important than ever.

As we face these challenges, the Poverty Alliance and our members must consider how best to turn our campaigning energy into tangible changes that will impact on the lives of people living on low incomes. The charitable sector in Scotland involves more than 45,000 organisations, employing 135,000 people and more than 1.1 million volunteers involved. We need to turn those numbers into real political pressure, by getting organised and demanding the system change we talk so often about.

At the end of November 2024, 150 delegates attended the Poverty Alliance annual conference focused on how we make change happen. What strategies are open to our sector as we push for a Scotland free from poverty? How do we learn from existing, successful campaigns? How do we engage more groups and individuals? How do we remain resilient in the face of setbacks? And how can we apply this learning to our core policy priorities across child poverty, better public services, the Minimum Income Guarantee and social security reform at the UK level? The conference was an opportunity to discuss how we organise for change, from the grassroots to the national level, to learn from each other about what works, and to help shape the anti-poverty movement's campaigning priorities for the coming years.

Our opening plenary included inputs from **Dr Danny Sriskandarajah**, Chief Executive of the New Economics Foundation; **Roz Foyer**, General Secretary of the Scottish Trade Union Congress; and **Laura Young**, a climate activist, environmental scientist and ethical influencer. This was an opportunity to outline the key challenges and opportunities within the current campaigning landscape – including campaigning tactics and priorities. Alongside this write-up, you can also access videos of the opening and closing plenary sessions on the Poverty Alliance website.¹

¹ See <https://www.povertyalliance.org/makingchange/>

These briefings provide a write-up of the day's workshops, including summaries of presentations from expert speakers and discussions with attendees on key questions. In the closing plenary, attendees discussed a series of questions focused on the next steps for change, and a summary of those discussions are presented at the end of this briefing.

2. Morning workshops: Our options for making change

Morning workshops were an opportunity to explore how we build successful campaigns, looking at tactics and opportunities to build a strong movement around core priorities. These sessions focused on influencing policy; building and maintaining effective coalitions; grassroots up campaigning; and digital organising. Key findings from these sessions included:

- Our values are non-negotiable within our campaigns, but making space for different approaches is a useful approach to facilitating change within coalitions. Compromise is key – being flexible, willing to adapt – while maintaining a focus on core and broad objectives.
- Young people and young people's organisations are often missing from anti-poverty campaigning coalitions. There is a need to continue to diversify our campaigning coalitions and reach out to equalities organisations to ensure that those most likely to experience poverty are well-represented in our coalitions.
- Specific sectors are not actively engaged in coalition building, even though there would be clear benefits to their participation. Target sectors included educational establishments; faith groups; and health and social care organisations. There also remains a broader challenge in engaging organisations who do not recognise their work as anti-poverty work.
- Making change happen necessitates engagement with those who are not currently part of our spaces, including those on the right wing of politics and private business.
- A feeling that the anti-poverty movement is focused on economic policy can create a barrier to diversifying our coalitions. The connections between poverty and other injustices such as violence against women, or the family support sector is not always recognised. Within some of our campaigning coalitions, diverse expertise is not always being sought, valued or taken seriously. The movement can invite wider voices and be open to learning.
- Practical aspects of coalition building were also highlighted, including ensuring clarity around participation and setting clear goals and timelines for actions. Discussion acknowledged the administrative work required to make coalitions inclusive and functional.
- Accessibility issues must be central to decisions relating to digital organising and social media, including language and clarity of communication.
- Within social media and digital organising, we must have clarity about our target audience as this impacts wider decision making on tactics and platforms. Are we aiming to engage with policy makers or the public?

- To actively involve the grassroots and ensure our campaigning comes from the ground up, it is necessary to encourage and develop peer support and harness relationships that already exist in communities. It was seen as critical to recognise that the people who know their communities are in the best position to do the organising, as opposed to people being ‘parachuted in’.
- We must find ways to create time for people and organisations including recognising that building trust – which is crucial for success – takes time.
- To enable the involvement of those with lived experience of poverty, we must first focus on income maximisation and other forms of support so that people in poverty are able to engage in activism.
- The need to develop a cohesive, collective approach to ‘insider’ policy advocacy campaigning with united messages and clarity regarding our core asks was viewed as essential to making change happen. Attendees highlighted the importance of making the most of the access we have and not taking access to decision makers as a success in and of itself. We need to make sure that we are making demands and ensuring that our access results in change.
- Throughout the morning sessions, the importance of better recognising the rural perspective of poverty and campaigning issues was seen as critical. Bringing in the perspectives of rural organisations and those with lived experience of living on a low-income in rural Scotland can diversify our campaigning and ensure it represents different aspects of poverty.
- Participants noted the importance of not just pushing for further policy change, but also in holding policy makers to account for implementation of existing policies and commitments. Examples included the obligations under the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 and the need for implementation of pre-existing commitments on free school meals, homelessness and self-directed support in social care.

3. Afternoon workshops: What are we fighting for?

The afternoon sessions were focused on how we apply the campaigning tactics discussed earlier in the day to the key issues facing the anti-poverty sector. What campaigning options will be most effective in meeting these pressing challenges? These sessions focused on adequate incomes; housing; tax justice; and achieving a just transition. Key findings from these sessions included:

- A strong evidence base for our advocacy work, including expected impact on poverty rates and costs. This evidence is necessary to achieving organisational, political and media buy-in for our campaigns.

- For many of our campaigning priorities, public engagement was identified as a critical strategy. The benefit of public engagement was demonstrated in the context of the campaign for equal marriage, and was seen as being particularly important in ongoing campaigns for tax justice.
- To support this ambition, the narrative framework of our campaigns was seen as critical – with simple, clear messaging needed for all our work. Complicated language can erect a barrier to buy-in. It is also necessary to tailor our messaging to different audiences.
- The private sector and the business community were stakeholders that were identified throughout our afternoon workshops as being key to many of our priorities, including taxation reform and achieving adequate incomes. There were questions about how we better engage the private sector in our work to build new coalitions and diverse allies.
- There was widespread consensus that lived experience must be at the heart of our campaigns and advocacy. Lived experience engagement cannot just be about consulting, but genuine co-production of campaigns.
- Human rights based-approaches were viewed as a potential means of pushing for change. Rooting our campaigns in human rights can also assist in building strong coalitions and partnerships with the human rights sector in Scotland.
- Some campaigning priorities, such as housing, can feel disjointed from wider anti-poverty policy-making and campaigning. Attendees suggested it would be helpful to emphasise the interconnectedness of housing with other social issues, such as poverty, stigma and the specific impacts experienced by marginalised groups to ensure the critical issue of housing is mainstreamed throughout anti-poverty advocacy.
- Keeping energy, momentum and patience were highlighted as being critical, as we are now working in a context where many of the issues we are working on, such as homelessness or child poverty, have been normalised.
- Social media, despite challenging changes in this space, is still viewed as a key arena for campaigning and advocacy by attendees. TikTok was viewed as an untapped arena with potential to reach a new audience. While there were mixed views on X, some felt that we need to maintain a presence on this platform so we have visibility to those who do not necessarily agree with us and avoid the echo chamber.
- There is more coalition and relationship building needed to build a strong consensus for a just transition. Some attendees have found it difficult to picture the place of the people they work with in the green transition, and others felt the voices of those experiencing poverty have not been at the heart of this agenda. This must include building greater capacity in organisations, communities and individuals around what a just transition is and means.

- The roadmap that has been prominent in Poverty Alliance campaigning on the Minimum Income Guarantee was welcomed and viewed as a useful model for wider campaigning – including how we tackle poverty in Scotland, and the steps needed to achieve a just transition.
- Third sector funding again emerged throughout afternoon discussions as a key barrier to making change happen, as well as presenting challenges for coalition building and collaborative working due to competition for funding within the sector. This, once again, points to the importance of fair funding principles, as outlined by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations.



Morning Session 1: Grassroots Up – Getting Our Communities Organised

1. Introduction

In the conference's opening plenary, speakers spoke about the step change needed to tackle the complex and inter-connected issues which underpin social injustice, both in Scotland and beyond. They were clear that this step change will not happen without power being built in communities, and without communities being supported to come together to demand change. There are rich traditions that we can draw upon when working to put communities at the heart of social change, of which community development and community organising are just two.

Chaired by **David Reilly**, Communities and Networks Manager at the Poverty Alliance, this session explored what can be learned from these approaches, and how we can apply these lessons in Scotland to push forward the anti-poverty agenda. It drew on the practical experience of **Sara Bryson**, Assistant Director of Citizens UK, and **Linda Craik**, member of the End Poverty Edinburgh Coalition.

This briefing provides a summary of the input from speakers Sara and Linda, as well as the feedback from group discussions.

2. Building community power

“Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.”

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Sara connected her life experiences and work in the voluntary sector to her commitment to anti-poverty work, and how she came to feel that existing approaches to tackling poverty are limited in their effectiveness. She talked about her own journey into community organising as an alternative way of thinking about and approaching change and introduced attendees to community organising as a method.

Community organising is a long-established method of achieving social change, with connections to historic movements in the United States such as the Civil Rights movement. It asserts that the 'central question' when thinking about social change is power: **if you want change, you have to have power.**

Community organising is a deliberative, intentional way of building power and is at the heart of the approach taken by Citizen's UK, who represent a broad alliance of civil society including education, faith and community organisations. Their model of community organising for social change follows five steps:

1. **Organise** by placing people and power at the heart of making change;
2. **Listen** to solutions from lived experience to form the roadmap for campaigns;
3. **Plan** through training in the tools of community organising to create strategies for change;
4. **Act** to shift the balance of power; and
5. **Negotiate** by bringing together power-holders within civil society to hold them accountable and progress change.

Crucially – although these steps will not necessarily happen in exactly the order above – it is vital to organise, listen, plan and act before negotiation begins. This ensures that, once negotiations are taking place, they are taking place from a position of power that has already been built in the community.

Citizen's UK use this model of change to support communities to achieve their goals. They will campaign on any issue, as long as it's driven by the grassroots. Examples have included the 'Just Change' campaign which emerged from listening to the experience of pupils on free school meals. Pupils described how the payment cards they were given to access school meals did not provide them with access to their change if they underspend on food. Instead, this underspend was retained by the private providers of school meals as profit. It was estimated as much as £88m a year of funding, intended to feed pupils on free school meals, was being lost in this way. Using their community organising approach, Citizen's UK worked with pupils and faith leaders to achieve a systems change which resulted in £17,000 being accessed by the children in just one school.

Sara finished by concluding that *"change is possible but we have to get organised, this needs power and this needs alliances of people working together."*

3. The power of citizen-led movements

Linda spoke about her experiences of citizen engagement as a member of End Poverty Edinburgh (EPE), which is a group of independent citizens aiming to raise awareness of poverty in Edinburgh, influence decision-making, and hold the city to account.

EPE has around twelve members from a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences, united in their commitment to end poverty in Edinburgh and ensure that the voices of those with lived experience are heard and able to influence decision makers. The group was brought together four years ago, and has been supported since then by the Poverty Alliance.

Linda described how the impacts of poverty extend beyond the material effects of low incomes and can entail the loss of dignity, self-esteem, self-confidence and identity. EPE goes some way towards bringing back dignity for the people involved.

The group regularly engages with officials in the council and has provided training to people in front line roles such as advice services to counter the judgement and stigmatisation that people in poverty can experience. They have also campaigned for advice points in local areas and argued that online services are not the answer for everyone.

With the support of the Poverty Alliance, EPE members understand that their views are important and valued. To recruit and support others to engage in citizen-led work, they need to be reassured that their views are valid, that they are important as individuals and that they are a key part of the process of achieving change. At the same time, individuals involved must also make a commitment and be helped to bring a sense of proportion in terms of their expectations about the speed and scale of change.

Linda finished by concluding that one of the biggest barriers she observed to building community power and finding solutions to social problems remains the short-term funding for civil society organisations who offer support, and can organise, communities.

4. Discussion

In small groups, attendees were asked to think about how community organising for anti-poverty could be galvanised in Scotland, using the following questions as a guide:

- What tools and support will communities need to get organised?
- Who is missing from our attempts to organise locally and how can we involve them?
- What are the barriers preventing civil society organisations working together?

Feedback from small group discussions focused on key actions or approaches which attendees felt could help with the adoption of a community organising model. These included:

- Recognising the key difference between the role of activists and the role of organisers.
- Avoiding jargon and using creative approaches to engage with people.
- Encouraging and developing peer support and harness relationships that already exist in communities.
- Finding ways to create time for people and organisations including recognising that building trust – which is crucial – takes time.
- Supporting and promoting collaboration between civil society organisations;
- Considering approaches which focus first on income maximisation and other forms of support so that people in poverty can engage in activism.
- Recognising that people who know their communities are in the best position to do the organising, as opposed to people being ‘parachuted in’.
- Being kind and listening to one another.

Morning workshop 2: Building Coalitions for Change

1. Introduction

The anti-poverty movement works across a diverse range of areas and topics. Several of our campaigning priorities, such as tax justice or fair funding for the third sector, move well beyond the anti-poverty movement alone. For some of our campaigns, there is a need to build broad-based coalitions to get our message across. This session examined how best to build effective campaigning coalitions for change. In particular, the session looked at how we identify cross-cutting priorities, and effective mechanisms of building and maintaining broad-based coalitions in the face of competing priorities?

Chaired by **Lynn Anderson**, Living Wage Scotland Manager, we heard from **Sara Hall**, Deputy Director, External Affairs, Tax Justice Network and **Becky Kenton Lake**, Coalition Manager, Stop Climate Chaos Scotland. Both speakers shared their experiences of building and maintaining coalitions, as well as their top tips for movement building.

2. Building a coalition for tax justice

Sara Hall outlined the growth of the Tax Justice Network from its foundation seven years ago by one person, Robert Palmer, to a team of nine staff. While this is significant growth, Tax Justice Network remains a small organisation tackling a huge contentious issue. Sara was clear that *“If we don't work together with many partners then absolutely no-one will listen to just nine people.”* Tax Justice Network's approach to movement building more than 'broad-based coalition' building. They began talking to think tanks, other smaller organisations and a handful of politicians.

As an issue, tax justice cuts across so many social justice areas – care services, climate change, tackling inequality – so there are links with organisations in many areas who are always being told 'there's no money for the reforms you are proposing'. There is a tax reform that could support each and every social justice issue, including raising the revenue needed for the social change we are calling for.

Sara shared her top tips for movement building:

- **Find a salient hook to campaign on:** Example of Windfall Tax Campaign bringing together dynamic mix of voices from climate to fuel poverty and social justice organisations. As a result, the UK Government announced a windfall profits levy within three months.
- **Run effective meetings:** Short and sweet, with clear agendas. Let everyone have their say, within reason, and record action points only in the papers. This encourages attendance as you cannot skim the minutes for discussion points.

- **Do not be afraid to close the group once goals are accomplished:** The alternative is to go dormant and reconvene the group, as necessary. Staying light on your feet saves everyone's time.
- **Do not over-formalise:** While professional behaviour is a pre-requisite, formulate loose coalitions of the willing, rather than gatekeeping. This is all too common in the sector, and it is unclear what this approach serves.
- **Try and win:** Have some kind of impact and be sure to celebrate the momentum you have built. Emphasise every achievement you have had together. Nothing keeps people engaged and maintains momentum more than seeing some success.

3. Building a coalition for climate justice

Becky Kenton Lake outlined how Stop Climate Chaos Scotland (SCCS) now has over 70 members campaigning for fast, fair action to reduce emissions and pursue environmental justice. This is a diverse coalition including faith groups, trade unions, student groups, and third sector organisations.

What makes a formal coalition different from other types of network is having active engaged members, energised by coming together to form that momentum collectively, rather than being represented by an organisation or network. All members sign up to this way of working together actively. Avoiding duplication within the movement is important.

Becky shared her top tips for coalition building:

- **Clear communication and decision making:** Coalition working can be tricky without clear processes guiding how you feed in, how you can influence decisions. Without these processes in place, members are likely to disengage. Processes must recognise barriers to engagement and being flexible is very important.
- **Relationship Management:** Recognising different needs of members is vital. Within a coalition, smaller organisations want different things from large NGOs. There is a need to think about how you make the work relevant to all, understanding what different members want to get out of it. Within the development of processes, it is also necessary to think about how to deal with conflict when it arises.
- **Identify cross-cutting priorities:** SCCS initially had a narrow focus on climate, now extended focus to linked priorities and underlining fair funding needed for these priorities. This can really unite lots of different organisations. Avoid focussing on things that are difficult to agree on – this can lead to long meetings trying to agree when members have starkly different views. Focus on what you agree on, not what you do not.

Finally, Becky reflected that coalitions evolve over time, members engage in different ways over time too and underlined the importance of being flexible to accommodate these changes over time.

4. Questions from the floor

Did you bring the group together around the purpose, or get the group together and agree a purpose?

Sara Hall outlined how Tax Justice Network convene several groups, some with a very specific purpose, others more broad. For example, a quarterly call open to the wider Tax Justice Movement of over 100 organisations and academics. Some of these smaller groups have more specific focus such as taxing wealth, the UK civil society working group on the UN Tax Convention. Having lots of conversations keeps Tax Justice Network sighted on external events coming up, and what is prominent in public debate.

If the organisation think something is needed, but people do not attend, this points to this structure not being needed. When you have a reputation and track record as a good convenor, people are willing to attend. It helps to utilise co-convenors to share the load.

How can individual members of a coalition seek to have influence? How to strike the right balance between compromise, meeting people where they are at on different issues, and retaining your own purpose as an organisation? How can we work with coalitions to make, e.g. gender equality part of other organisations' work; and bring their issues into how we talk about e.g. gender justice?

Sara Hall noted that influencing can depend on the level of gatekeeping within coalitions, with the Tax Justice Network being very fluid. Gender equality is fundamental to tax justice and the organisation works closely with the Women's Budget Group and amplify their work, and vice versa. There is strength in fleshing out the intersections between our causes.

Becky noted that the point of a coalition is to connect people's different expertise. She recommended being flexible and letting people interpret what the coalition is doing in their own way. Amplifying members' work is really important. The member-led climate manifesto brings together policies from all members. Members can bring ideas for activities, which we are open to developing as long as they fit with our overall aims.

Coalition working can be frustrating with feelings that one organisation is not pulling their weight, or another that is capturing the space. How do you navigate this? Drive to amplify grassroots organisations front and centre, often fails – how do we stop organisations that are big and loud occupying the space?

Becky agreed that it can be challenging managing relationships, tensions, power dynamics, and awareness of the different resources members have. It helps to find different ways that members can engage – not everyone has time to feed into work planning, so it is important to find ways to engage and listen to smaller organisations – do the work to listen and tune in to members' priorities.

Sara noted that this challenge is partly why the Tax Justice Network hold spaces so loosely, not being too prescriptive, and being flexible. Underfunding is a shared concern: convening groups is resource intensive, so we ask organisations to participate in ways that are proportionate. Sometimes it is the smaller organisations that are keen or able to give the most. It is key that you do not underestimate the resources and soft skills required to keep coalitions running and work collaboratively by asking what others can support with in terms of chairing, or secretariat functions.

5. Table Discussions

In small groups, attendees were asked to think about how we build effective coalitions, using the following questions as a guide:

- Which organisations and stakeholders are missing from anti-poverty coalitions?
- How do we work across 'difference'?
- How can we engage those whose priorities may not be poverty or inequality?

Which organisations and stakeholders are currently missing from anti-poverty coalitions?

- People with direct lived experience of poverty are often missing from coalitions. Barriers, such as poverty-related stigma, can prevent communities and individuals with lived experience from getting involved in campaigning.
- Specific demographics who are under-represented in decision-making processes are often missing. Discussions focused on young people being missing from coalitions and anti-poverty campaigning.
- On organisations and sectors, attendees highlighted that educational establishments are a missing channel for raising awareness of poverty and anti-poverty work. Faith-based groups or organisations can face barriers engaging in wider anti-poverty networks due to perceptions that priorities may not align, leading community partners, and potential beneficiaries to disengage. Organisations in the health and social care space are missing from anti-poverty coalitions – partly due to time and resource constraints. Huge amount of stigma in health settings, which, alongside jargon and other barriers, feeds into health inequalities.
- There are a range of examples where private businesses have taken on an active, enthusiastic and impactful role, and lack of involvement could in part be due to assumptions on their willingness. In other cases, the role of private businesses has been inconsistent, and it can be difficult to maintain engagement.

How do we work across ‘difference’, including different life experiences, and different priorities?

- Building on common values and principles is what ties it all together. Attendees felt the Poverty Alliance have a key role here. The importance of keeping a coalition broad enough to bring a lot of people in, but not so broad that it becomes unfocused and vague was discussed. Dropping any ‘us and them’ mentality to identify mutual aims, acknowledge difference, but focus on where we agree.
- There is a challenge to engage organisations who do not recognise their work as anti-poverty work.
- For individuals, shame, and labels, can make people hesitant to align with ‘poverty’ language, and impacts of stigma include low self-esteem that creates barriers to getting involved. Talking about the many overlapping barriers can overcome the sense of blame people feel – centering on the fact that this is about a lack of opportunities, not lack of aspiration.
- Real change necessitates engagement with those who are not currently part of our spaces, including those on the right wing of politics.
- Some values are non-negotiable but making space for different approaches is key to facilitating change. Compromise is key – being flexible, willing to adapt – while maintaining a focus on core and broad objectives. Building relationships of trust, growing empathy, and listening to each other.
- We need to recognise different partners’ contexts. For example, a challenge for non-campaigning organisations such as housing associations is *‘how far can we challenge in the sphere we are in?’*.
- A feeling that the anti-poverty movement is focused on economic policy can create a barrier to diversifying our coalitions. The connections between poverty and other injustices such as violence against women, or the family support sector is not always recognised. Within coalitions, diverse expertise is not always being sought, valued or taken seriously. The movement can invite wider voices and be open to learning, and avoiding defensiveness.

How can we engage those whose priorities may not be poverty or inequality?

- Poverty can mean different things to different stakeholders. A clear, simple definition could help create a common thread.
- Re-framing our campaigns and messages to underline how poverty touches everything helps to bring in wider stakeholders. We would be clear in how poverty relates to wider campaigning priorities.

Making Change Happen

Morning workshop 2: Building Coalitions for Change

- Moving messaging away from individualism to a focus on community. There is an important role for community education and engagement and bringing diverse voices together through mechanisms such as citizens assemblies.
- There is a key role for our messaging in coalitions, with clear agreed messaging, and tailoring for specific audiences. Attendees felt we should better engage influencers, and other carriers of messages via social media; TikTok in particular. Within our messaging, using stories, lived experience and data were viewed as critical.
- Private sector have a role, but in the third sector we can be hesitant to approach the private sector with ideas, unless a specific fund or project is being offered. Requires courage to be open / honest about what the ask is.
- Leave space to consider different approaches, including more inclusive and diverse spaces, not just for those with lived experience but for smaller and grassroots organisations, too. Smaller organisations often feel they do not have the language for policy work or are not taken seriously in those spaces.
- Community development is vital to build skills, capacity, and people power. We must ask how communities can affect politics and policy?

What can prevent coalitions from working effectively?

- A key barrier discussed was funding and resource challenges, especially where there is competition for funding between organisations within coalitions.
- Discussions concluded that while coalition working can be time consuming and challenging, lone working is more exhausting and unsustainable for the type of change we want to see.
- In some cases, the time and resources required to help build an effective coalition can result in coalitions running on longer than necessary. It requires courage to recognise when it's time to try a different approach, and to move on. Celebrating successes that were achieved previously can support coalitions to end well.

Morning workshop 3: Influencing policy – What’s effective?

1. Introduction

A key part of making social change is influencing the legislation and policies that determine what governments, local and national, prioritise. There are lots of approaches to having influence. It is rarely a simple choice between vocal campaigning on the ‘outside’ or quiet advocacy on the ‘inside’. Over the last 25 years of devolution there have been numerous positive legislative developments relevant to poverty and inequality but also campaigns that have failed in their ambitions.

This workshop looked at practical examples of how policy change has been secured and how the anti-poverty sector can utilise an effective mix of approaches and tactics to make change happen. Chair **Emma Jackson**, Poverty Alliance Board Member and Strategic Lead for Social Justice at Citizens Advice Scotland, was joined by **John Dickie**, Director of the Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland and spoke on behalf of the End Child Poverty Coalition in Scotland on the campaign for the creation of the Scottish Child Payment, and **Christopher Clannachan**, Policy and Campaigns Officer at the Equality Network shared reflections on what was effective in the campaigns for Equal Marriage between 1999 and 2014.

2. What can we learn from successful campaigns? The Scottish Child Payment

On behalf of the End Child Poverty Coalition in Scotland, John Dickie reflected on eight years of campaigning that led to the Scottish Child Payment. Campaigning began with the Scotland Act 2016, which devolved new powers on social security to Scotland. At a Poverty Alliance conference in that same year, with a focus on how best to utilise those powers, the Child Poverty Action group pitched a proposal to increase social security support to families with children through top-ups to child benefit. From there, a coalition of anti-poverty organisations worked together on the child benefit top-up campaign ‘Give Me Five’. This campaign ultimately led to the creation of the Scottish Child Payment.

Reflecting on this successful campaign, John Dickie highlighted five things that are key to the success of campaigning:

- 1. Having a clear, single communicable ask.**
- 2. An evidence base:** the campaign worked with academics to develop financial modelling highlighting the impact of a Scottish Child Payment on child poverty. This enabled the campaign to demonstrate it was a policy that would help the Scottish Government reach its child poverty targets and have a tangible impact. This was a key part of the campaign.

- 3. Working in partnership with a range of organisations and groups including faith groups, trade unions and anti-poverty campaigners:** John reflected that any other single organisation would not have had the capacity or links to campaign as successfully alone. That recognition of limited capacity was a key learning point.
- 4. Pragmatism in approaches to influencing politicians and the government:** promoting the headline call and speaking to politicians across the political parties to find a common ground were part of the process of influencing. The campaign was focused on increasing social security support to families with children, and John reflected that this was “less about the precise mechanism and more about getting money into families’ pockets”. This flexibility and pragmatism were key to success.
- 5. Persistence:** progress can be slow and it can take time to build success. John concluded that: “It didn’t come easily – there was nothing inevitable”.

3. What can we learn from successful campaigns? Equal Marriage Campaign

Christopher Clannachan of the Equality Network, shared learning from the success of the Equal Marriage Campaign in Scotland. The Equal Marriage Campaign was a long process with a lot of work behind the scenes. Various campaign tools were used in the campaign including surveys, a video campaign with Amy McDonald, a parliament reception, valentines’ cards, a leaders’ pledge and media engagement.

A key aspect of the successful campaign was the framing used. Rather than using the framing of ‘gay marriage’, the campaign utilised language of ‘equal marriage’ which enabled the campaign to be more expansive and focused on equality. The question of promoting equality is more difficult to deny or fight against. The importance of finding common ground with politicians and special advisors was shared. However, the campaign was not just engaging with MSPs, but different groups at different times to promote strategic campaigning goals. This included an active effort to engage with faith communities, which led to them coming out in support.

The messaging of the campaign, that equal marriage was the obvious thing for Scotland to do by joining other progressive countries, lay behind its success and set the tone for media and politicians. The positivity of the campaign also trickled down to public opinion; by 2012, two thirds of the public were in favour of equal marriage. Christopher reflected on the importance of getting the balance between focusing on ‘insider space’ with politicians and special advisors alongside campaigning and mobilising and making calls from ‘outside’. This combination of tactics was also critical to the success of the campaign.

4. What do we need to do at this stage to make further progress?

In small groups, attendees were asked to think about how we can make further progress on policy influencing and the best use of tactics, using the following questions as a guide:

- What do we need to do at this stage to make further progress on policy change to build a Scotland free from poverty?
- How do we make ‘inside’ policy campaigns more relevant to those focused on immediate challenges?
- What are the campaigning techniques that make for successful policy campaigns?

The table discussions included a range of suggestions on how further progress on policy change to tackle poverty can be made in Scotland. Discussions largely focused on building partnerships and coalitions.

Working in partnership with other organisations in the anti-poverty space as well as ‘unexpected partners’

- It was seen as critical to engage with unexpected partners to look at key issues from different sides and make an active effort to engage with people who might be in opposition to a campaigning issue. Examples of unexpected partners included opposition MSPs/MPs and the private sector.
- Working in partnership with a range of partners could also create the potential for ‘coalitions of breadth, depth and diversity’ and ‘transcend the potential for divide’ as well as potential for ‘out of box thinking’.
- Networking, for example via Poverty Alliance membership meetings, where shared issues can be raised and discussed were seen as important.
- Challenges of collaboration were discussed as organisations expressed feelings of being pitted against each other for funding.
- The need to develop a cohesive, collective approach to ‘insider’ campaigning with united messages and clarity – what our core asks are viewed as is essential to making change happen.
- The importance of ensuring a rural focus to campaigning on poverty was raised.

Improving how organisations bring in lived experience.

- For people with experience of poverty to be involved in policy influencing, barriers need to be further removed. There is also a need for a system of support to enable involvement across Scottish Government departments. Recognition of lived experience contributions, creating safe spaces for people to participate in and careful planning were highlighted. It is vital that participation is meaningful.
- The importance of sustaining community activism was raised.

Clarity of messaging

- Campaigning for the Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG) was discussed, including the need to develop clear, simple messaging on the policy to ensure it is digestible. This is vital as a group raised concerns that there is the potential for MIG to be viewed as merely another social security payment, rather than comprehending the depth and breadth of the policy.
- Clearly evidencing the benefits and having the courage to engage with political opponents as part of campaigning activity was raised.
- There were also discussions focused on messaging including having targeted asks and a long-term vision.
- Attendees were clear that it was not just about what we say, but how we make people feel with storytelling and sharing the experiences of people experiencing poverty being key.

Accountability

- Participants noted the importance of not just pushing for further policy change, but also in holding policy makers to account for implementation of existing policies and commitments. An example was given of ensuring that the government does not negate its responsibilities under the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024, but also the need for implementation of pre-existing commitments on free school meals, homelessness and self-directed support in social care.
- The nature of policy making and implementation occurring in ‘siloes’ was also criticised with a call for an “intersectional consideration of all policies across all government directorates”.
- Attendees also highlighted the importance of making the most of the access we have, and not taking access itself as a success. We need to make sure that we are making demands and ensuring that our access to Scottish Government and decision makers leads to change.

Morning Session 4: Digital Organising

1. Introduction

During the Covid-19 pandemic, organisations pivoted campaigns work almost exclusively to digital platforms where they worked to build communities, to move people to take action online. Our online strategies can enable us to mobilise and engage with a wider audience, but they must also complement our offline campaigns.

The anti-poverty movement can use digital spaces to continue to build communities and, in turn, build power to influence change. This session asked how these channels and tools can be used to raise awareness of mission and goals and how digital organising tactics can be more powerful.

This session explored how the anti-poverty movement can build the capacity to create and seize opportunities to affect meaningful change by utilising digital tools. Chair **David Eyre**, Communications Officer at the Poverty Alliance, was joined by **Meredith Sneddon**, Head of Digital at the Trussell Trust, and **Niamh Ni Mhaoileoin**, Sheila McKechnie Associate, who presented on their findings and experiences.

This briefing provides a summary of the input from speakers Meredith and Niamh, as well as feedback from attendees questions and small group discussions.

2. Creating an engaging digital campaign

The Trussell Trust is an anti-poverty charity and community of food banks. They work across the UK to ensure that, in the future, nobody will need a food bank to survive, while also providing food and practical support to people left without enough money to live on.

Meredith opened by sharing information on the Trust's 'Guarantee Our Essentials' campaign,¹ speaking specifically to three elements of the campaign. This campaign had an original aim of contacting party leaders and ended with over 150,000 people signing their petition. To attract attention, they intentionally showed what was happening in foodbanks across the nation and, crucially, equipped food bank users to raise their own voices.

Following the campaign itself, to keep momentum going and continue food bank involvement, the Trussell Trust reached out to their supporters and asked for messages to be sent to food banks. This resulted in over 1,000 messages of hope and support, which Trussell also put online.

¹ Further information available at: <https://www.trussell.org.uk/support-us/guarantee-our-essentials>

Further to this, during the 2024 UK General Election, they were able to use their existing digital community to encourage people to put pressure on their candidates. Over 5,000 people did just that, resulting in 519 pledges being signed by candidates, 120 of whom went on to become MPs.

Meredith's main takeaways from her work are:

- **Keep the message simple:** The campaign linked universal credit and food banks, so making that connection as clear as possible was used to broaden their goals;
- **Keep the message short:** people spend only seconds of time looking at any one thing online, so they need to get to the point quickly;
- **Use stories of lived experience:** this makes them personal and specific, as well as genuine, all of which lend credibility;
- **Personalise the content you are putting out:** make it specific to each platform;
- **Use other voices, not just your own:** including influencers and sector partners;
- **Measure the success of whatever you're putting out:** have frequent meetings to discuss how things are going and listen and reflect on feedback;
- **Aim for authenticity and don't stress about making it look too professional.**

Meredith also spoke about techniques to deepen online engagement:

- Share on the ground footage of what is happening; this is immediate and personalises the story your organization is telling;
- Respond to news and updates as they happen; be reactive, relevant and adaptable;
- Celebrate your local and smaller wins and let people know that things aren't hopeless; and
- Continue the journey which people are on; this means sending updates on new developments so that you can keep people involved in your story.

3. Successful digital organising

Niamh spoke about the limits and benefits of digital organising, and her experiences working in the field. The Sheila McKechnie Foundation aims to provide consultancy, resources and training to people to help them engage more effectively in their own social change campaigns. Niamh's background in senior reporting roles in organisations such as the Trade Union Congress, Shelter and Save the Children means that she understands the complexities of communicating across several different platforms, and how best to utilise digital organising in any campaign.

Niamh was clear that, in approaching digital organising, we need to be honest with ourselves. Digital spaces have been designed to reward people for not being deeply engaged, and for churning through updates quickly. They are also privatised and designed to make money. To attract attention, any digital campaign therefore needs to be bold and energetic, and if it needs to take risks then you might just need to do that. The worst thing to be in a digital space is boring.

Niamh's highlighted three main points to consider of any digital campaign:

Consider the theory of change rather than starting with strategy, meaning focus beyond the obvious, such as petitions.

It is important to think about who your audience is, and if what you are doing is appropriate to target them. In other words, we need to think about what you are trying to achieve rather than using a 'one size fits all' approach. Sometimes this means being hyper local and focusing on one person or group who can become a focal or contact point between the decision makers and your larger organisation.

It is also important to build in a sense of urgency to encourage people to get involved immediately. You need to give people short term goals, while also keeping the long-term goal in mind yourself.

Finally, you must frequently evaluate what you are doing and decide if it is working. Digital tools give us access to data so that you can now look at what's working and base your future choices on that.

Consider the overall story of what you are doing. Once you have decided your strategy, having consistent stories told over time is the next step.

This means drawing on relevant messages which will resonate with your audience. It is important to consider what will motivate your audience. From there, you can structure a simple story which identifies what the problem is, why your acting right now, what they can do and what the solution would look like

The clarity of message is very important but so is making something entertaining and even, occasionally, funny.

Consider whether you are organising or mobilising.

These are two intertwined goals, but the specifics differ. Organising is the work you do to build connections, and this is what sustains a long-term movement. Mobilising is getting people to take immediate action.

Digital tools can be very useful for building community, especially with giving participants the sense that they are important. You need to consider what your long-term goals are with any of this work.

4. Discussion

Following the presentations, attendees were given the opportunity to ask Meredith and Niamh further questions about their work and digital organising.

On the questions around what small organisations with limited resources should focus on, Meredith stated that they should do less and be more intentional. Rather than posting everywhere or constantly, consider which platforms are more advantageous to you. Social media is the gateway to the world, so think about where your message should be. Niamh added to this stating that organisations should really consider what their goals are before acting. You might be trying to reach a small audience of people, and small organisations have an advantage in grassroots organising.

Attendees asked whether, given current context, organisation should be leaving the social media platform X (formerly Twitter). Meredith stated that we should not leave X as we need to continue to have conversations with the people that don't agree with us. While we don't need to engage with those who are openly hateful others can be reached and should not be abandoned. Further to this, Niamh stated that, as a sector, we should learn from what is currently happening on X that we shouldn't overinvest in any one platform. It is important to be trying new things and seeing what works.

The final questions from attendees was around what techniques the speakers would suggest to a community group who is having problems accessing tech and is facing issues due to English not being their first language. Meredith's immediate thought was that everyone in the UK, and particularly in the charitable sector, needs to be making their content accessible. It is the responsibility of larger charities to be working with smaller organisations to let them tell their stories; whenever we do something we need to be involving people with lived experience. Building on this, Niamh stated that we also need to be getting people in the room when it comes to designing digital practices and building that into the structure of our digital communication from the start. We need to thinking about accessibility in its multitude and this includes translating information into different languages.

5. Key recommendations

Following the presentations, attendees worked in small groups to answer the following questions which impact digital organising, and which we should consider as it becomes more prominent:

- What digital tools will communities and organisations need to get organised?
- How can we help each other learn the skills we need to use them?
- How can we link digital with more 'traditional' forms of activism?
- How can we deepen engagement via digital campaigning?

Attendees identified that accessibility should be key to decisions on digital organising. This includes points such as language, both in terms of those who do not have English as their first language and clarity of communication. In this context, jargon should be avoided. Practicality is another point of concern. We need to make sure tools such as screen readers are available and that our websites meet accessibility standards. It is also important to consider the target audience of any campaign, for example, is it aimed toward policy makers or the public.

Attendees were clear that the key to helping each other to learn the skills we need to use in digital organising is to provide support at every stage of their own development, which has the added benefit of forming stronger bonds between organisations. As individuals we can make the time for teaching others, as well as taking larger scale action by linking smaller digital campaigns with tools and resources.

In linking digital with more traditional forms of activism, attendees spoke of the need for consistency across both fields. Ideally a set of community guidelines should be established, which can then keep interactions consistent and help protect people. It is also important to be interactive with audiences and to use digital platforms as a place for conversation. This means reply to messages on social media, so long as they are not offensive, and building relationships with other activists. Facebook was noted as a good digital platform for local organising.



Afternoon workshop 1: A Scotland Where We All Have Access to an Adequate Income

1. Introduction

After over 10 years of cuts and restrictions, our social security system is failing the people it is intended to support. The system no longer functions as a safety net. Similarly, structural issues in our labour market mean that paid work is not always the route out of poverty that it should be. With the fraying of the social contract, we have seen the redistribution of risk to those least able to bear it.

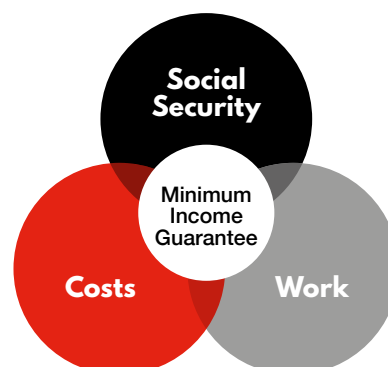
The cumulative impacts of multiple income shocks, such as Covid-19 and the cost of living crisis, mean many families are in increasingly precarious positions. We need to consider how to re-invest in critical social infrastructure and social protection, and reduce the impacts on those most at risk of poverty.

This workshop got to the heart of what it means to experience poverty – the lack of access to an adequate income. We heard from **Satwat Rehman**, Chief Executive of One Parent Families Scotland (OPFS) and a member of the Minimum Income Guarantee Expert Group, and **Tom Pollard**, Head of Social Policy at the New Economics Foundation (NEF), about two ambitious policy ideas that are both centred around achieving a minimum income level below which no one is allowed to fall: the Minimum Income Guarantee and the Living Income.

2. Delivering a Minimum Income Guarantee

Satwat Rehman introduced the concept of the Minimum Income Guarantee, an idea that is gathering traction in Scotland, with an Expert Group developing the Scottish Government's commitment to the proposal. The Guarantee would be a fundamental change in the social contract in Scotland that would guarantee financial security, and ensure everyone can live with dignity. The Guarantee recognises differences across individual households and circumstances such as the additional costs of disability, living in rural, remote and island areas, or of being in a single adult household with children. The idea is more than just a social security proposal, made up of three complementary parts, requiring changes to our labour market so that more people can access fair work; renewal of our public services to reduce the cost of living for low-incomes households; and the strengthening of our social security system, including the creation of a Guarantee payment. It is a whole system approach in which all spheres must work together to support people to reach the minimum income level.

Paid work: Employers will play a role in providing well paid work that is attractive and accessible with good terms and conditions and opportunities for progression, including for those only able to work part-time. Making good work the norm will require Scottish Government to ensure employers are providing this, as well as investing in schools and further education to ensure that individuals have access to the skills needed to thrive. Though paid work may be the route to achieving the Guarantee for many, it must not be seen as the route for all.



Costs: The cost of living presents a barrier to individuals and households achieving a dignified quality of life. The more that a household's costs and essentials are provided through equitable collective services, for free or at a lower cost, the lower the level of a Minimum Income Guarantee would need to be. This includes services such as childcare provision so that parents, particularly mothers, can enter paid work, or reduced costs of essentials such as broadband and energy. Use of language will be critical, especially for making the case for universal provision to combat stigma.

Social Security: For those who do not reach the Guarantee level via reformed work and reduced living costs, social security payments would be used to ensure people have access to an adequate income for a decent and dignified life. The value of unpaid work and care, and what this contributes to economy and society, needs to be fully recognised.

Ultimately, the Minimum Income Guarantee has the potential to create a more equal society for all, guaranteeing financial security and protecting people against the risks of poverty. As the expert working group concludes its work, with the final report being published early next year, much remains to be done to build public and political support for the Guarantee.

3. The Living Income Proposal

NEF have developed a proposal for a national Living Income,¹ to substantiate what a minimum income, benchmarked to need, would look like in the UK. The proposal pegs how much social security different compositions of households would require to reach the Minimum Income Standard² (MIS) after housing and childcare costs.

¹ New Economics Foundation (2022) *The National Living Income: Guaranteeing a Decent Minimum Income for All* available at https://neweconomics.org/uploads/files/NEF_Living-income.pdf

² See *The Minimum Income Standard for the United Kingdom* available at: <https://www.lboro.ac.uk/research/crsp/minimum-income-standard/>

Making Change Happen

Afternoon workshop 1: A Scotland Where We All Have Access to an Adequate Income

Within the proposal of a Living Income, the standard payment i.e., the guaranteed amount below which no one is allowed to fall, is set at 50% of the MIS after housing and childcare costs (AHCC). Variations in households would result in people receiving different percentage amounts. The income level rises to 75% of the MIS (AHCC); payments of up to 100% of the MIS (AHCC) for children, those with a disability, or those unable to look for work. The goal of the policy is for everyone to reach 100% of the MIS through both social security and work for those who are able. One way of achieving this is through the removal of taxation and benefits withdrawal until individuals have reached 100% of the MIS.

Key challenges foreseen to implementing the Living Income include affordability and political pushback due to concerns around work disincentive and accountability to conditionality. Messaging will play a key role in overcoming these challenges by highlighting the cost of poverty and substantiating that this proposal is an investment that will have longer term benefits as well as the understanding that systems focused on compliance undermine relationship building. A key dimension of NEF's work has been analysing the role of conditionality in our social security system, and the need to move from compliance to engagement. Ultimately, ensuring everyone has a secure foundation to build from will lead to broader benefits for society.

While discussions around increasing social security rates in the current political climate will not be easy, financial modelling being carried out by NEF, the Minimum Income Guarantee work in Scotland and potential upcoming pilots of the Living Income will provide opportunities to disprove the current narrative around social security and substantiate the case for a new approach.



4. Group Discussions

In small groups, attendees were asked to think about how we can progress campaigns for an adequate income, using the questions below as a guide.

What do we need to do to persuade our political and business leaders to take the actions we need to secure adequate incomes for all?

There was consensus across groups for the need to continue building the business case and evidence cost savings. Looking to examples of what has worked in other countries including how businesses have responded and how they are managing to keep the minimum income level in line with rising inflation was recommended. Paying careful attention to the narrative and framing, being clear about the ask and who it extends to and listening to and understanding opposition and concerns around business pressures with the goal of finding common ground was proposed.

What obstacles do we need to overcome?

Rhetoric and resistance from mainstream media and politicians, along with public opinion and attitudes were key obstacles identified. This is particularly true in the context of continued negative rhetoric towards our social security system and those who access that support. There were suggestions to counteract this via social media and targeted education initiatives e.g., in schools, colleges, universities, tenant forums and other services, with the voices of lived experience crucial to transform perspectives. Focusing on equality, fairness and the humanity of the issue along with keeping messaging simple was proposed to help resonate with the public. Developing powerful lobby groups, increasing joined up working and creating opportunities to bring together lived experience partners were other suggested strategies.

What campaigning tactics are most effective for ensuring everyone has access to an adequate income?

The importance of relationship building was emphasised here including cross-party working, finding and working with allies, local organizing and developing trusted local relationships. Clearly outlining the steps on a roadmap was recommended to aid long-term thinking. Focussing on small wins, amplifying existing successful projects and keeping the asks small, achievable and anchored initially was proposed to normalise and change the conversation. Other strategies for raising public awareness included ‘drip-feeding’ critical education by taking it to where people gather including social media platforms such as TikTok and switching up the narrative to shine a light on what maintains the status quo.

Afternoon workshop 2: Tackling Poverty and the Climate Crisis – Achieving a Just Transition

1. Introduction

In the opening plenary of The Poverty Alliance's Making Change Happen conference, climate activist Laura Young posed attendees a question: how do we ensure that climate action does not exacerbate poverty? Tackling poverty and reaching our net zero ambitions should be viewed as shared and interlinked priorities. Rising energy costs, poor quality homes, and expensive and inefficient transport all add to people's experiences of poverty, while pouring more carbon into the atmosphere. The deeply connected nature of the climate crisis and poverty can be framed as a triple injustice:

- Those on the lowest incomes contribute the least to the climate crisis;
- They experience this crisis first and worst because of the financial resource and security necessary to respond to the impacts of environmental breakdown; and
- Without proactive action, the measures designed to tackle the climate crisis will further entrench financial inequality.

The question is no longer whether we reduce emissions, it is how we do that fairly and ensure those on the lowest incomes do not pay the heaviest price. Scotland's legislation on climate action includes welcome just transition principles. However, to make the inclusion of these principles meaningful, we need to transform the economy and society in ways that simultaneously drives down emissions but also address inequality.

This workshop explored this topic further, and we were pleased to be joined by: **Jamie Livingstone**, Head of Oxfam Scotland, who chaired the session; **Miriam Brett**, Co-Director of Future Economy Scotland; and **Fraser Stewart**, Just Transition Lead at Regen and Member of the Scottish Government's Fuel Poverty Advisory Board.

This briefing provides a summary of the input from speakers Miriam and Fraser, as well as the feedback from group discussions.

2. The case for a new economic model

Miriam highlighted that climate and environmental breakdown must be understood as being fuelled by – and a consequence of – gross inequalities and power imbalances of agency, income and wealth within our society.

Decades of privatisation, economic liberalisation, and austerity have not only disproportionately harmed the most marginalised groups in society, but has also funnelled wealth upwards. The Covid-19 pandemic and cost of living crisis have further exposed long standing injustices and vulnerabilities, including the cost of our reliance on fossil fuels.

At the nexus of these outcomes is an unjust and unequal economic system. It is one that disempowers communities, corrodes self-determination, and undermines social, cultural and economic potential. Miriam framed the scale of inequality in Scotland through the reality that the wealthiest 2% of households own 18% of wealth.

Inherently intertwined with inequalities is the distribution of the causes and consequences of environmental breakdown, both within and between countries and global regions. Future Economy Scotland research has found soaring carbon inequality in Scotland, where carbon emissions for the richest 5% of households are 4.1 times higher than the poorest 5% of households in Scotland. When looking at just private transport and aviation, those figures become 10 and 11 times higher respectively.¹

The nature of this crisis, and the urgency to which we must take action, means that we sit at a critical juncture. Maintaining status quo – and making marginal tweaks to a system that is driving inequality and fuelling climate breakdown – is not an option. In that context, we have seen welcome steps in Scotland, with the Government's commitment to net zero by 2045. The difficult task now is how we transform the economy to meet those goals.

Decarbonising Scotland's economy as quickly as possible is vital but how we do that matters, particularly given the legacy of Scotland's past industrial transitions. The scars of our move away from coal mining and steel industries are still visible today in communities through levels of child poverty, homelessness, and food and fuel insecurity. As we prepare to embark on another industrial transition, it is vital that lessons are learned from that past.

Moving forward, we need a new social contract that is rooted in a value system of sustainability, tackling wealth and power imbalances, and a breaking of business as usual. One way to bring all of this together is through a just transition.

The concept of a just transition can sometimes see pushback, particularly through a narrative – largely perpetuated by fossil fuel lobbyists and PR – that claims it will harm oil and gas workers through loss of income and employment opportunities. However, just transition

¹ Future Economy Scotland (2023) *Measuring Carbon Inequality in Scotland*. Available at: <https://www.futureeconomy.scot/publications/59-measuring-carbon-inequality-in-scotland>

principles are grounded in fair work principles. The concept has its roots in the trade union movement, evolving in the 1970s and 80s to establish pathways for workers impacted by environmental regulatory frameworks.

Miriam explained that there is no single definition of a just transition, but highlighted the definition that Future Economy Scotland use: It is a coordinated plan to decarbonise Scotland's economy and tackle the nature crisis while:

- Creating secure, green and unionised jobs throughout rural and urban Scotland;
- Reskilling and retraining workers as part of the managed decline of carbon intensive industries;
- Reducing social, economic and regional inequalities, alleviating poverty and increasing living standards;
- Ensuring that impacted communities, trade unions and businesses and workers are given a meaningful stake and say in decisions that affect them;
- Fairly sharing the costs and benefits of decarbonisation, including by embracing more democratic forms of ownership and governance; and
- Ensuring that Scotland – as a high historic and current emitter – recognises global imbalances created by climate and environmental breakdown, and builds a genuinely reparative approach as we go forward.

The challenge ahead is huge. A just transition not only requires a wholesale transformation of Scotland's economy across policy and multiple different sectors, it will also take massive financial investment. However, crucially, if we can achieve the principles of a just transition outlined above, it is Scotland's greatest economic opportunity.

3. The energy transition as a social and economic transition

Fraser used energy as a focus area for the just transition conversation. When framing the intersection between poverty, wider inequality and the just transition, transforming our energy system should be seen as an opportunity to make life genuinely better for people across Scotland.

The significant role that energy has played in the cost of living crisis is a good example of how our lack of action on this transition – and a lack of focus on the people at the end of the energy system – has come to fruition. Energy prices have risen sharply; this is not necessarily because energy has become more expensive, but because we are still highly dependent on volatile, international fossil fuel markets. Scotland still relies on gas for much of its energy, so accelerating the transition to renewables is critical as a means not only to reduce carbon emissions, but also to protect households from changing international markets.

Fraser highlighted that energy crises do not just damage people in their homes, through fuel poverty and rent arrears. It can manifest in mounting debt, physical and mental ill health, addiction, and homelessness. This then has a national level economic impact, in particular through spending on social security support. In the past few years, the UK has spent in excess of £70 billion protecting people from rising bills. This short term support is symbolic of the willingness of decision makers to plaster over the deepening cracks in our energy systems, while simultaneously providing large amounts of public money to private companies, particularly those in the fossil fuel industry. **It is therefore clear that we must fundamentally rethink how and why we do energy.**

Our national Governments are embarking on an acceleration towards more green power. Last year, Scotland generated more renewable energy than it could use if every single household had an electric car and a heat pump, with 113% of our energy needs generated in Scotland last year from renewables.

This is undeniably a move in the right direction. The challenge here is that energy transitions are taken in isolation as a purely technical challenge. However, you cannot truly achieve a full transition without making things better for people. There is a perception that doing things fairly and bringing all people along on the transition journey means that change cannot happen at the pace we need it to. Fraser pushed back on this sentiment, stating that without making the transition fair – and doing it with people front and centre – we will not achieve our goals around sustainable energy.

Transitioning our energy systems is the single biggest social and economic opportunity we are likely to live through. To tackle the climate crisis, almost everything will have to change. This includes the economy, housing, energy, land, agriculture, communities, and transport. Fraser was clear that there is no good reason that we cannot change those things to directly tackle poverty and inequality.

In the context of the energy transition, there is an opportunity to use new technologies to:

- Meaningfully lower bills for people;
- Make homes healthier and more resilient; and
- Create new opportunities for communities to have some ownership of the energy system.

The above will not happen without firmly understanding the specific perspectives and needs of those communities most at risk of being left behind. In other words, this transition will not be successful without addressing fundamental social injustices. Therefore, we must reframe the energy transition as a social and economic transformation, as well as technical transition.

In this context, outcomes must also be reframed. That would mean shifting our approach to outcomes away from just focusing on the amount of power generated by renewable energy in Scotland, and looking also to things like progress towards the eradication of fuel poverty, improved health outcomes, and the creation of safe and secure jobs in green industries for people in deindustrialised communities.

4. Discussion

In small groups, attendees were asked to think about how anti-poverty and climate organisations and actions can work together to deliver a just transition, using the following questions as a guide:

- How can we best make links between poverty, climate change, and a just transition to net zero?
- What practical things can climate change and anti-poverty groups do to work together?
- What campaigning tactics are most effective in this space?

Poverty is an urgent issue in Scotland, and so is the just transition, so attendees felt that this joint urgency inherently links these topics together. They identified the far-ranging potential and opportunities that systems change delivered through just transition principles provides for the radical social change we need. They were clear that community represents strength, so a just transition's potential to build resilience and solidarity is vital for tackling these social and economic transitions together, and ensuring no one is left behind.

However, attendees were also clear that this potential will not be met without centring the needs and experiences of marginalised groups. This includes those living in poverty. Communities who are at the hard end of these green technologies – particularly those living in rural, coastal and island communities – should therefore be in the driving seat of change.

Attendees highlighted some aspects of the transition that have not been just, raising the issue of transitioning to heat pumps in social housing without consultation with householders. The short term increase in bills for those living in poverty or on a low income risks further entrenching financial insecurity and discourages buy-in for a green transition, particularly as there has been little financial support been made available for scenarios like this.

There is, therefore, a danger of a wedge forming between communities and economies whose financial security is being undermined by unjust transitions, and a national narrative that praises and encourages the quick expansion of green technologies to support progress towards our climate targets. For many attendees, this meant that they found it difficult to picture the place of the people they work with in the green transition.

With the above in mind, attendees identified steps that we need to take in moving forward, including the need to:

- Build capacity in organisations, communities and individuals around what a just transition is and means.
- Think about messaging and what that means in how we communicate the benefit of a meaningfully delivered just transition for people living on low incomes, without making people feel isolated from the topic. There is still a need to combat inaccurate information and messaging clashes between some parts of the just transition narrative and the anti-poverty narrative. Language and communication is therefore key.

- Move away from a just transition narrative that forefronts individual action like investing in heat pumps and electric cars – which excludes those living on a low income – rather than speaking about the transformation needed in our systems.
- Be clear about the incremental change needed to achieve a just transition, which would encourage buy-in. We could frame this as a roadmap – like we do with the Minimum Income Guarantee – with, for example, the delivery of a social tariff being one of the first stops.
- Frame this conversation in the context of being community led and bringing ownership back into the hands of those who are at the end of systems: local communities. There is potential for a distinct Scottish messaging here to relate climate action to people’s lived experience.
- Ensure that the employability support offered to transition workers into green jobs and new economies speaks to local need, so that communities co-lead responses and benefit fully from transitions.
- Build strong coalitions and collaborative working across the anti-poverty and climate sectors. Being good allies to each other, both across and within sectors, is key. However, it was recognised that this can be difficult particularly when organisations are struggling with funding, and are often competing for funding.



Afternoon Session 3: Achieving Safe, Affordable Housing for All

1. Introduction

Access to a warm, safe and sustainable home is the cornerstone of a good life. There have been positive improvements to housing and homelessness policy since the formation of the Scottish Parliament, with far better rights and an emphasis placed on housing through working groups, reviews and strategies.

However, over 10,000 children are living in temporary accommodation and 40,000 people presented as homeless in Scotland in 2023.¹ Further to this, the last decade saw rents increase by 62% across Scotland, rising by 88.5% in Edinburgh and 95.5% in Glasgow,² with Canopy's rent affordability index estimating that 20% of renters spend over 50% of their income on rent.³

Therefore, despite strong policy and campaigning, we are in a housing and homelessness crisis. This situation is particularly acute for young people, women, LGBTQIA+, ethnic minorities, and migrants. This crisis is being compounded by substantial cuts to the Scottish Government's housing budget, which puts both the Affordable Housing Supply Programme's targets and the realisation of tenant's rights at risk.

This session explored the role of housing in making progress on poverty, and where we go next to ensure everyone has access to an affordable, accessible and safe home that meets their needs. The session was chaired by **Mhairi Snowden**, Head of Policy and Programmes at Homeless Network Scotland, and a Poverty Alliance Board Member. We were joined by guest speakers **Emma Saunders**, National Organiser at Living Rent, and **Gordon MacRae**, Assistant Director (Communications and Advocacy) at Shelter Scotland.

This briefing provides a summary of the input from speakers Emma and Gordon, as well as the feedback from group discussions.

¹ Scottish Government (2024) *Homelessness in Scotland: 2023-4*. Available at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-in-scotland-2023-24/>

² The National (2024) *Tenants and trade unions call for emergency protections as rent cap to end*. Available at: <https://www.thenational.scot/news/24121822.tenants-trade-unions-call-emergency-protections/>

³ Canopy (2024) *Rental Affordability Index: Q3 2024*. Available at: <https://www.canopy.rent/rental-affordability-index/q3-2024>

2. Rent controls for affordable housing

Living Rent use a community organising approach in neighbourhoods across Scotland to build power from the ground up. They are often asked how tenants can better know their rights. However, their experience is that it is not only a problem of people knowing their rights, it is also a problem of having the power to implement these rights. This showcases the need for better legislation and regulation that penalises landlords for breaking the law.

Some economists argue that increasing the supply of housing will bring rents down. Living Rent argue that we can also bring rents down by regulation. Emma was clear that we cannot just build ourselves out of a housing crisis, with reliance on building new homes alone being a recipe for a continued affordability crisis. Research using data from England shows that even if the UK Government achieves its ambitious target of building 1.5 million new homes in five years, the rent/wage ratio would fall by just 0.7-1.4%.⁴ Therefore, even if high numbers of new buildings are produced in Scotland, the small reduction in costs will not solve the current affordability crisis.

Further to this, workforce shortages mean that ambitious new build targets are very hard to meet. The new build industry is also in direct competition with the retrofit industry for workers. If one is to be prioritised over the other, this creates additional challenges for our climate ambitions. Emma was clear that, alongside the necessary efforts to build more houses and improve the housing stock, further rent regulation is essential.

Emma expanded on other levers that Living Rent use for change, including:

- Trying to ensure that existing National Planning Development Framework is applied to ensure that legally binding requirements for the building of affordable housing is enforced in housing developments across Scotland;
- Fighting for Edinburgh's tourist tax to be put back into housing services; and
- Supporting people to resist evictions, rent increases, and deposit fraud through collective action. Part of Living Rent's work resisting evictions has been working with councils to buy back the flats where there have been unfair evictions.

3. Reform to our housing system

Shelter is a year on from one of their most impactful campaigns, influencing 13 local authorities to declare a housing emergency and commit to a housing action plan. Despite this, in the 2024/25 budget, the Scottish Government cut the housing budget. Overnight, affordable housing building stopped, affordable housing teams were made redundant, and the capacity to build new homes and maintain existing homes reduced significantly. These cuts are now also having an impact on the housing services sector.

⁴ Generation Rent (2024) *Homes, not landlords, are the key to rent affordability*. Available at <https://www.generationrent.org/2024/08/01/homes-not-landlords-are-the-key-to-rent-affordability/>

Gordon expanded on the change that we need to see to make safe, sustainable and affordable housing a reality for all people.

We need to change how the housing system works

Despite warm words, we have homelessness by design through the choices of government. The sector has worked to secure better rights and legislation, but it is not currently working as it should.

Our current housing systems protect some, while increasing vulnerability for others. Housing policy is designed to sustain house prices, and quantitative easing after the financial crisis of 2008 protected homeowners at the expense of renters. Homelessness is therefore not a byproduct of housing policy; it is built in.

We need to change the political tolerance for poverty

We need to change the political tolerance for poverty and policy failure, and there needs to be a political consequence for breaking the law to secure long term change. This must include a change to the tolerance of the public for our current crisis.

The Scottish Government needs to take bold action to lead change in our housing system, to ensure that housing policy is well implemented and resourced. In that context, we need to think about how we can create a financial system that is robust enough to ensure that policy is implemented, in the face of changing political will and parliamentary cycles.

We need a cultural shift in how we understand housing

In Scotland we have a strong cultural affinity for home ownership, with property being seen as playing an important role in financial security. We therefore need to think critically about the social and economic forces that push us towards this, and what an alternative view of the role of property in financial security looks like. This would need to involve a package of change including rent controls, increased numbers of social homes, and a system that ensures people can both rent and put money aside.

We need to understand the extent of vested interests in the current housing system

Despite housing being a human right, there is significant wealth and vested interests in the housing sector that work against realising that right for all. Real estate makes the greatest contribution to UK GDP of any industry, with 62% of people in Scotland living in an owner-occupied home.

We have policy that prioritises asset wealth and accumulation over fighting homelessness. With more than £10 billion each year providing vital support through housing benefit, this often goes to private landlords who are renting out former council houses acquired through to right to buy.

The wealth available to fight the introduction of policy that works for all people is significant, so should not be underestimated. When Edinburgh City Council announced plans to regulate short-term lets more stringently, short-term let landlords raised £300,000 in one week to take Edinburgh City Council to court, and later raising a further £350,000. They published weekly reports on the impact of the regulation on the mental health of short-term let landlords. We therefore need to understand how well resourced this sector is.

We need to think critically about what our role is as a sector

We need to think critically about the way we support lived experience engagement for Scottish Government, especially given their recent high-profile backtracking on policy commitments.

We have to recognise what power we have. It is not that we should not sit on working groups, but we need to be careful not to be co-opted. We should not celebrate over just having a seat at the table; this is simply not enough. Rather, we need to think about the role of the public in creating a situation where policy makers are held to account.

Frontline services and private trusts often spend time and resource mitigating the bad practice and human rights abuses of the Government and local authorities. There is, therefore, thinking needed around how can we work to ensure accountability.

4. Discussion

In small groups, attendees were asked to reflect on speaker contributions using the following questions as a guide:

- What practical, concrete action can we take to make affordable housing a priority for our political leaders?
- How do we best engage organisations not focused on housing in housing focused campaigns?
- What campaigning tactics are most effective in this space?

Attendees explored various strategies, beginning with the idea of using human rights language and highlighting the ways in which housing issues intersect with broader concerns. This was seen as something that could be helpful in building coalitions with human rights organisations. More broadly, attendees suggested it would be helpful to emphasise the interconnectedness of housing with other social issues, such as poverty, stigma, and the specific impacts experienced by marginalised groups.

Attendees discussed how housing could serve as a unifying force for groups within varied missions, and the importance of pulling out how housing impacts the groups that different organisations support or advocate for. This may require targeted outreach. A general lack of awareness of the impact of housing was raised, and the opportunity for training and

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engaging media to alleviate this. Attendees also felt it was important to understand who is affected by the housing crisis, and to actively try to reach those people and groups affected.

Practical aspects of coalition building were also highlighted, including ensuring clarity around participation and setting clear goals and timelines for actions. Discussion acknowledged the administrative work required to make coalitions inclusive and functional and the funded time required. Attendees emphasised the importance of avoiding creating divisions between groups such as homeowners and renters. A unified narrative was deemed essential, particularly one that centres hope and practical solutions while drawing on lived experience to convey the urgency of the crisis. However, participants noted the challenge of raising awareness in a system where poor housing is normalised.

Framing housing as a human rights issue and increasing rural representation in campaigns were identified as priorities. Including voices with lived experience was highlighted as essential for both movement building and influencing. Attendees suggested that decision-makers could be influenced through direct exposure to the realities of housing challenges, such as site visits or visual presentations. They also suggested co-producing campaigns and action plans with service users to ensure that the strategies remain grounded and impactful.



Afternoon Session 4: Tax Justice – Where Next for Funding the Fight Against Poverty?

1. Introduction

Better tax builds better budgets, which builds a better future for all of us. The Scottish Government has taken initial steps which have made our taxation system more progressive, including changes to income tax. However, this does not go far enough to raise the revenue that is needed to invest in our critical public services and social safety net. There are increasing calls for the UK and Scottish Governments to take steps to better tax wealth. This is a politically contentious issue, with some feeling we have reached the end of what is possible in Scotland on tax.

The session explored the role of taxation in addressing inequality and supporting public services through building coalitions for further tax reform. The session was chaired by **Polly Jones**, Head of Scotland at the Trussell Trust. Our guest speakers were **Lewis Ryder-Jones**, Advocacy Advisor at Oxfam Scotland, and **Natasha Turner**, Head of Communications at the Fair Tax Foundation. They highlighted the need for systemic reforms, increased corporate accountability, and public engagement to create a fairer tax system that could unlock resources to reduce poverty.

This briefing provides a summary of the input from speakers, as well as reflections from attendees.

2. The need for a fairer tax system

Public services in Scotland, like childcare and social care, remain underfunded. Taxation plays a crucial role in addressing this shortfall and Lewis emphasised how Scotland's current tax system exacerbates inequality. Reform is therefore essential to improve the public services that we all rely on, but that offer a lifeline to those living in poverty. This reform includes fair taxation of wealth and property, as well as incentives to encourage ethical business practices.

The private sector can play an important role in both contributing to the public purse and investing in fair work practices to support the reduction of in-work poverty. Fair taxation of private companies would ensure the redistribution of income and wealth, helping tackle deep inequalities.

While acknowledging that members of the public could be resistant to higher taxes, Lewis was clear that strong communication about the long-term benefits, such as improved public services, could mitigate concerns. There is a growing global momentum behind tax reform and Lewis spoke about Tax Justice Scotland,¹ a movement campaigning for the Scottish Parliament to use its tax powers to help deliver a greener, fairer, more equal Scotland. Tax Justice Scotland brings together a diverse group of supporters which includes The Poverty Alliance alongside other anti-poverty charities, trade unions, and policy think tanks. Their recent briefing, 'Choosing a Fairer Future for All',² outlines a roadmap for tax transformation in Scotland.

3. The role of businesses in making a positive social and economic impact

Tax avoidance is a significant issue in the UK, depriving the Government of vital revenue while also undermining the ability of businesses to compete domestically and internationally. Natasha discussed how employers could contribute more equitably to funding public services through fair corporate taxation. She spoke about the Fair Tax Mark³ accreditation which was launched in 2014 and recognises employers who pay the right amount of corporate income tax at the right time and in the right place. The accreditation was first launched in the UK and has since been adopted by other nations including Denmark, Finland, Germany and Italy.

Companies such as SSE and Scottish Water have earned this mark, demonstrating their commitment to fair and transparent taxation. The accreditation can have tangible business benefits, helping companies strengthen their existing Environmental, Social and Governance strategies, and build trust with stakeholders and investors. Fair corporate taxation helps prevent an undue concentration of wealth and ensures a more equitable distribution of the tax burden among individuals and businesses.

Natasha highlighted ongoing campaigns that promote responsible taxation in public procurement and reporting, while also advocating for a shift in public perception to see taxes as an investment in society, rather than just a burden. Progress in corporate transparency can have an overall impact on the direction of travel of policy and legislation, helping to shape a fairer and more productive future.

¹ Further information available at: <https://taxjustice.scot/>

² Tax Justice Scotland (2024) *Choosing a fairer future for all: A vision for tax transformation in Scotland*. Available at: <https://taxjustice.scot/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/TaxJusticeScotland-Report-Digital-Nov24.pdf>

³ Further information available at: <https://fairtaxmark.net/>

4. Discussion

Following the speaker's contributions, attendees were encouraged to share questions and comments relating to what they had heard. The discussion addressed key questions about balancing taxation with public support.

Participants spoke about the trade-off between corporate taxation and donations to support individual causes. Speakers noted that while both are important, taxes provide a more reliable and sustainable source of funding for essential services compared to corporate donations.

Addressing concerns about Scotland's higher tax rates, attendees argued that the long-term benefits – such as better childcare and healthcare – justify these measures. Tax rates in Scotland are still comparatively low compared to many European countries, but other nations are benefitting from higher wage growth and better living standards overall. Change is needed to tackle deepening inequalities in the society.

When asked about redefining business growth, Lewis and Natahsa called for a shift away from prioritising profits to a model focused on sustainability; this includes paying fair taxes. On issues of tax evasion, such as the use of offshore accounts, the discussion emphasised the need for increased corporate transparency and international cooperation to close loopholes. The participants also explored the challenge of changing public narratives, with speakers urging a reframing of taxation from burden to investment.

5. Key recommendations

Using the following questions as a guide, attendees were asked to consider how we can best campaign for a fairer tax system and encourage political leaders to unlock wealth to invest in a better society:

- How do we campaign for change at a time when political discourse is focused on the tight financial environment?
- How can we encourage our political leaders to unlock wealth to invest in a better society?
- What campaigning tactics are most effective in this space?

Attendees stressed the importance of demonstrating the tangible benefits of tax revenue, such as improved local services, using case studies to build public trust. They called for transparent messaging around inequality and the redistribution of wealth to highlight the fairness of proposed tax reforms.

Public engagement was identified as a critical strategy, with calls for education campaigns that pressure political leaders and emphasise the long-term gains of fair taxation. Attendees noted that framing taxation as a shared social responsibility could help counter negative narratives, particularly in the media. Building trust through evidence of clear returns on investment, such as stronger public services, was seen as essential for gaining public support.

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Discussions made clear the need for political advocacy and attendees encouraged collaboration with local politicians and cross-party efforts to advance tax reform. To address scepticism, they suggested showcasing Scotland's wealth and the potential for a fairer tax system to reduce inequality and foster economic sustainability.

Further to this, attendees spoke to the role of private businesses in encouraging wider reform. Large private businesses advocating for fair taxation could act as allies, bringing this issue higher on the political agenda, and prompting leaders to action. The extra money circulating in the local economy would also directly benefit businesses in the form of extra spending and better public services, meaning employers would directly benefit from policy changes towards fairer taxation.



Closing Plenary: Opportunities for Change

1. Introduction

Campaigning for change can be a slow process, and it is important to celebrate our successes. Building on the discussions we held throughout the day, our closing plenary was an opportunity to learn from campaigns which have achieved social, political, and policy changes.

To shape discussions, we heard from a panel of expert speakers including **Jonathan Cox**, Deputy Director, Citizens UK; Claire Telfer, Head of Scotland, Save the Children; and Amal Azzudin, Freelance/Activist. The panel discussed what inspires them to make change, their campaigning values, and their priorities and practical plans to achieve that change. You can watch these powerful contributions on The Poverty Alliance website.¹

Following this input, conference attendees were invited to share ideas and were given three questions to spark their thoughts:

- What inspires you and gives you hope?
- What have we learned from conference?
- How can The Poverty Alliance support organisations to make change through their own campaigns?

This final briefing provides a summary of the key findings from those discussions.

2. What inspires you and gives you hope?

Conversations centered around the people in the room. Speakers at the workshops and the plenary sessions were described as “inspiring” and viewed as being **realistic about challenges but spoke positively about the ability to make change**. Attendees welcomed **examples of best practice in making this change happen**.

More widely, attendees shared their own success stories in making change happen as things that inspire them and gives them hope. There was consensus amongst many of the discussion groups that **“celebrating success” is important**. With this sharing of experiences and successes, as well as challenges faced, discussion groups indicated that they **felt less alone in the fight against poverty** and had a **shared goal for a just and equal society**.

¹ See <https://www.povertyalliance.org/makingchange/>

Bringing people together and listening to what they have to say was something that gives people hope. **Collaborative efforts are important in highlighting solidarity. Hearing from young people** was mentioned multiple times during discussions, and in particular their knowledge of issues and their enthusiasm for tackling them. Attendees highlighted the young people they work with who are overcoming numerous challenges and thriving as being something that keeps them motivated for change. **Bringing together people from different groups, backgrounds, experiences and expertise** was viewed as helpful in making links between issues such as poverty and climate change, and poverty and health.

Table discussions highlighted our **shared values of justice and compassion**, and attendees expressed that “being on the right side of history” inspired them to keep going in their fight to make change. The need to **share key messages and evidence more widely**, given the numbers of people who do not understand their rights or the people who do not view poverty as an injustice, is something that keeps attendees motivated that there is more to do. There is a need to **go further, faster and to take more sectors, organisations and people into our coalitions** to achieve the change we want to see.

Finally, a common theme related to **the resilience of those working together to challenge poverty and the need to keep going**. Our movement needs to **keep challenging the decisions made by those in power**. Attendees remained motivated by “community spirit” in their own areas of work, and hearing stories of success and positivity.

3. What will you/your organisation do after today to make change?

Presence on social media dominated much of the discussions when posed this question. Attendees highlighted a need to **broaden their engagement on social media** – both interacting with others on social media and using different platforms, for example TikTok. The **experience and knowledge of young people and youth voices** more generally in this space was viewed to be of significant importance.

Conversations around **reflecting and evaluating their own time, resource and impact** were noted. One of our expert speakers, Clare Telfer, highlighted this as something Save the Children had undertaken, since changing their overall mission based on research and engagement with those who had an interest in their work. Attendees reflected on this, with indications they were going to **look at their own policies, practices, and ways of making change**. In terms of reflecting on time and resources there was recognition that many attendees were part of various coalitions – **evaluating which coalitions to be part of and where meaningful engagement happens** was highlighted as an area which may require change.

Continuing to build networks was discussed as a crucial part of making change. Again, discussions by some groups centered around how to engage with young people for example school pupils and youth groups. In addition to this, **engaging with those who might not necessarily agree with our views** was seen as important. We must work together to **change hearts and minds** and mobilising shared values of justice and compassion. Although engaging differently on social media was viewed as important, of equal importance were discussions around **in-person interactions**. **Creating more spaces, like The Poverty Alliance annual conference, where networking and discussions could take place.**

Speakers highlighted the importance of **making small changes, and celebrating those wins on the roadmap to larger-scale change**. Attendees spoke about being inspired around where they can **make change outside their own organisational roles**, and what this change would look like in their own local communities. **Local activism was discussed as an important gateway to discuss wider issues**. Attendees were inspired by the Strathaven Community Bus Travel, which started with local people being concerned about cuts to local transport and ended with local people using their power to start their own community bus service, and in the process highlighting issues around climate change, accessibility, and social isolation.

4. What support from Poverty Alliance is needed to support you to make change?

The Poverty Alliance's work to influence policy and practice, support communities to challenge poverty, build the anti-poverty movement, change attitudes, and provide evidence through research was recognised, and valued by attendees throughout this discussions. Wider feedback about the support needed to enable organisations in our membership to make change will be considered and embedded as we develop our work in the coming months and years.

Discussions around **building resources** related to continuing to **provide training and statistical information, sharing our campaigning knowledge and expertise**, and **supporting organisations to share information with their own networks**. **Existing opportunities for training were welcomed** and attendees were clear that framing training should continue. There was also interest in an expanded offer of support. Attendees expressed an interest in media training, recognising the importance of amplifying diverse voices. The Poverty Alliance provides media training, but this discussion highlighted the importance of further **promoting our existing offer** to the membership.

On **collaboration**, key areas of discussion included **working together on climate justice issues in relation to poverty, investing in young people being in the room, and expanding the meaningful participation of those with lived experience**. Attendees shared their interest in **more in-person and online spaces for collaboration**, including suggestions for how this could be facilitated. While attendees felt assured that The Poverty

Alliance were in rooms with decision-makers advocating on behalf of the membership, they also **wanted more opportunities to be in the room alongside The Poverty Alliance**. There were other suggestions about making sure that the variety of asks of the membership are more visible in campaigning work. However, there was also **recognition that there is power in coming together on a shared ask that everyone is able to support and work on** – this may require more focused sessions, and being more strategic with time and resources.

A similar theme across discussions was again **celebrating success** – whether big or small. This should include the success of The Poverty Alliance, our members, as well as acknowledging government policy success. With this, we should also be **supporting organisations to recognise the anti-poverty work they already do**.

The Poverty Alliance was viewed as having a critical role in **network building**. Attendees suggested that Poverty Alliance were in a position to **link large organisations with smaller ones, learn from those in the network and share that learning, and share funding opportunities**. The role of fair funding for the third sector was critical here, with attendees believing that The Poverty Alliance is an important voice in **challenging current funding practices**. Finally, attendees asked that The Poverty Alliance continue to challenge the status quo throughout our work.







The Poverty Alliance
94 Hope Street
Glasgow
G2 6PH
www.povertyalliance.org
0141 353 0440