

# SCOTTISH ANTI POVERTY REVIEW



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### EDITORIAL TEAM

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*The Poverty Alliance*

### DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in the Scottish Anti Poverty Review do not necessarily reflect those of The Poverty Alliance.

### ABOUT THE POVERTY ALLIANCE

The Poverty Alliance is a network of community, voluntary, statutory and other organisations whose vision is of a sustainable Scotland based on social and economic justice, with dignity for all, where poverty and inequalities are not tolerated and are challenged.

Our aim is to combat poverty by working with others to empower individuals and communities to affect change in the distribution of power and resources. To do this we:

- Work with people and communities experiencing poverty to empower them to address poverty
- Work with organisations to build a strong anti-poverty network in Scotland
- Support the development of policies which promote social justice and combat poverty
- Raise awareness about poverty and encourage debate

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# WELCOME

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## EDITORIAL

### Tackling poverty together



If you take a look back to 1992 it will quickly become clear why voluntary and community organisations took the decision to formally establish the Strathclyde Poverty Alliance. A few highlights will help jog your memory: the UK economy was in recession, with around 10 per cent of people out of work. No more potent symbol of the problems and changes in the Scottish economy at the time was the closure of the Ravenscraig steel plant in 1992. Despite strong community and trade union opposition the plant was closed, impacting the local economy and community for years to come.

Of course, at a time of rising unemployment and economic decline, those claiming social security were targets of abuse. Particularly memorable was Peter Lilley's speech, who was then Secretary of State for Social Security, at the 1992 Conservative Party conference. In his infamous 'little list' speech he stated he was closing down the 'something for nothing society' and cracking down on fraudulent benefit claims from 'bogus asylum seekers' and lone parents. Speeches like his undoubtedly would have inspired the earliest activists in the Strathclyde Poverty Alliance to take action, although perhaps not of the kind Mr Lilley would have wanted.

Europe was high on the political agenda in '92, with the Maastricht treaty signed by John Major's Conservative Government, paving the way for the introduction of the Euro, and the economic crisis that was Black Wednesday, causing the UK to crash out of the European Exchange Rate Mechanism.

Of course, we didn't sign up to the Social Chapter of the new treaty. The other big political story that year was the general election which returned the Conservative Party for a fourth term, and consequently re-invigorating the campaign for constitutional change in Scotland.

This is just a snapshot of some of the political and economic issues that were around in 1992. Longer term trends, of which these issues were part, were behind the establishment of the Alliance. Poverty had been increasing throughout the 1980s, a consequence of the unemployment and deindustrialisation brought about by monetarist economic policies. Inequality was growing too, and communities that always borne the brunt of unequal opportunities and outcomes suffered more. It was to have the voices of those communities heard, to influence the policies that were impacting on them, that fundamentally drove the establishment of the Strathclyde Poverty Alliance.

Focusing on the impact of poverty in communities across Strathclyde, and then from 1996 on communities across Scotland, has meant action by Alliance members on a very wide range of issues. These have included (from our earliest days) issues such as access to health services, the impact of poverty on black and ethnic minority communities, young people's experience of poverty, the impact of poverty on women, food and fuel poverty and many others. Having a focus on the real experience of poverty has allowed us to contribute to influencing policy in local authorities, the Scottish and UK Governments, as well as the European Commission.

Our role has not simply been to allow the voices of those experiencing poverty to be heard, important though that is. It has also been to bring together the wide range of organisations across Scotland, from grassroots campaigning groups, to international NGOs, from trades unions to faith based organisations, to begin building a common cause around what can sometimes seem a fractured anti-poverty agenda.

This convening role, one where we seek to open up spaces for dialogue, where we can allow alternative views and understandings of poverty to be expressed, has always been a critical part of our role.

No doubt, for some people, the process of engaging in yet another round of discussion and dialogue can at times feel painfully slow, and far removed from the urgent needs of those living in poverty. However, it is in this process that we identify those things that matter most to activists who are fighting poverty, to those who are experiencing it, through to the policy makers and politicians we are trying to influence.

It was through this kind of process, a listening project called Get Heard back in 2005, that we began to prioritise in-work poverty. After hearing the experiences of hundreds of people on low incomes across Scotland, we took the lead on launching the Scottish Living Wage Campaign with the STUC and Church of Scotland. Over the years this campaign has developed in ways that we would never have predicted. Not only have more than 1,000 employers across Scotland been accredited as paying the Living Wage leading to pay increases worth millions to workers, the policy is now the cornerstone of the Scottish Government's approach to fair work and has secured support across the political spectrum. We can track this change back to conversations we had with people living on low incomes across Scotland, and to our engagement with organisations that wanted to see real, practical, social change.

Sustaining a network that reaches across Scottish civil society that is able to both challenge and constructively work with politicians and policy makers has been a real achievement. It is because of the breadth of support and engagement that we have had across the last 25 years that we have been able to play a crucial role in ensuring that poverty stays high on the political agenda in Scotland. After 15 years with the Poverty Alliance, it is clear to me the difference that having a strong anti-poverty network that is in regular dialogue with policy makers and politicians can make to strategic responses to poverty. With a strong and coordinated anti-poverty lobby, then responses are likely to be less focused and long term.

Poverty is undoubtedly high on the political agenda in Scotland at the moment. The creation of a statutory Poverty and Inequality Commission, the centrality of dignity and respect in the design of our new social security powers, clear long term targets to reduce child

poverty are all signs of the strength of the anti-poverty agenda in Scotland. However, there are no grounds for complacency or celebration.

Many of the issues that were with us in 1992 are with us still in 2017: low pay, food insecurity, unemployment, the stigmatisation of people living on low incomes, cuts to our welfare system. As a network we are in a stronger position now to make the case for change than we were 25 years ago. But given the scale of the challenges we face, we will need to strengthen our network further. We need to enable more of the hundreds of organisations and thousands of individuals across Scotland who want social change to play a bigger part in our network. We need to make better use of all the tools at our disposal to challenge the dominant narratives about poverty, and we need to further strengthen our relationships with those who can make change, both inside and outside of government.

It has been a privilege to work at the Poverty Alliance for 15 years. To work alongside community activists, campaigners, policy makers and politicians who are committed to change has provided me with the inspiration and support to continue a fight that has sometimes seemed unwinnable. We have been fortunate to have the financial support of successive Scottish Governments, trusts and foundations, not to mention our members, that has allowed us to recruit an incredible staff team that has sought to turn the desire for social change into reality. We remain some distance from the realisation of that vision of a socially just Scotland free of poverty, but with the support of our diverse network we know that real progress can be made.

Peter Kelly  
Director of the Poverty Alliance



## 25 Years of The Poverty Alliance



I have received my annual letter from the DWP advising me of my pensioner's Cold Weather Payment. 25 years ago, the newly formed staff team of the Strathclyde Poverty Alliance, Janet Muir, Martha Campbell and myself, together with the aptly named activist Mrs. Isa Barr, brought media attention to the issue of elderly people struggling to remain warm in inadequate housing. This quickly became a multi-agency campaign, the Campaign for Cold Weather Credits, firstly in Scotland and then UK wide, that led to the formation of an All-Party Group at Westminster and, eventually, to the introduction of Cold Weather Payments and, now, to my letter.

This campaign built on what was, principally, a welfare rights based approach to anti-poverty work at the time to create networks and alliances with professionals and academics from many different sectors, health, energy efficiency, law, community development etc; an approach that we took into addressing other issues such as food poverty and which led us to engage with the wider sustainable development movement and to encourage it to incorporate domestic poverty into its thinking about the environment, social development and economy. Our work on food and fuel poverty, combined with the Alliance's Communities Against Poverty programme, the forerunner of EPIC, enabled activists to become involved nationally and internationally in issues that affected them locally and to engage directly with people in power whose decisions affected their lives.

Not that everything ran smoothly. There were tensions. Should an anti-poverty organisation use Lottery funding based on gambling? Should the Alliance take government money when government is the cause of the problem it is trying to solve? Should anyone except those experiencing poverty be entitled to speak publicly about poverty issues? Should there be a professionally staffed Poverty Alliance or should development come from grass roots leadership? These questions were hotly debated at the time and, as Director, I can admit to being torn between idealism and pragmatism. However, what I see now is a strong Alliance that continues to contain, if not resolve, these tensions in an effective way and that offers real leadership to a complex and diverse community of those who want to combat poverty.

A word of warning. Be careful what you wish for. At the time of devolution, the Alliance led a campaign for Government policy in Scotland to be based on a principle of social inclusion. This was intended to be an overarching meta objective that would inspire progressive policy making. As politicians struggled to make it tangible and measurable we have seen the principle being broken down into 'poverty', 'inequality', etc. and a focus on specific groups and issues without a sense of overall purpose. As someone who still applies for public funding for various initiatives, I have seen the vision of 'inclusion' being degraded into a set of tick box categories that must be met if funding is to be achieved. I know that I am not the only person who has sworn, silently or loudly, over this and I am sometimes embarrassed to admit that I might have had something to do with it. Maybe the new Poverty Commission could look again at the value of the holistic approach offered by the concept of Social Inclusion.

Cold Weather Payments took several years to realise, as have other Alliance initiatives and it is only recently that we have had to return to the defence of this universal benefit. Like others, I wish there was no need for a Poverty Alliance but, on balance, I am reassured that the Alliance is there for the long term to take its founding principles into addressing current and future issues of poverty in Scotland.

Damian Killeen OBE, former Director of the Poverty Alliance

## Achieving More Together

2017 marks the Poverty Alliance's 25th year in existence. From a team of just three staff, we now have 16 people working across a range of projects and policy issues, and together with organisations, policymakers, communities and individuals facing poverty across Scotland. At a time characterised by historically high levels of inequality in Scotland, where one in five people are living in poverty, the Poverty Alliance remains relevant - the need for a network of organisations and individuals committed to progressive social change is greater than ever.

I'm incredibly proud to be part of the organisation we are today - an inclusive and diverse network that takes into account how inequality affects people across society, drawing attention to the gendered impact of poverty and its impact on minority and ethnic communities. Including the voices of people with lived experience - real people facing poverty and inequality - is at the heart of what we do.

Since the organisation became a registered charity in 1992, many of the challenges we faced in the early 1990s are still with us, but we remain committed to change and we have secured real progress in this time. In 1992, the Secretary of State for Social Security was talking about his 'little list' of 'benefit cheats and scroungers' and today, the stigma attached to poverty is still a real issue. But we are working to combat this: our Stick Your Labels Campaign, that challenges unhelpful media narratives and misunderstandings of the drivers and impacts of poverty and inequality, has continued to build on the cross-party support it gained in 2016 by signing up more local authorities and voluntary organisations who are all committed to addressing the stigma.

Back in 1993, Wages Councils were abolished, leaving workers across the UK without any form of minimum wage protection. Today, we lead the Living Wage initiative in Scotland. Since it was launched in 2014, there were only 20 employers signed up. Today, a little over three years later, we have reached over 1000 employers. Over 25,000 people in Scotland have had a pay rise thanks to the Scottish Living Wage Initiative. At a time when people's budgets are under pressure from rising prices and stagnant wages, reaching this milestone is a real feat.



We have achieved so much recently by working together with a range of anti-poverty organisations: free school meals for all children from Primary One to Primary 3; the Give Me 5 campaign calling on the Scottish Government to top up Child Benefit by £5 per week, which would lift 30,000 children out of poverty, and most recently, the creation of the Poverty and Inequality Commission in statute, which will help guarantee independent scrutiny and be a real driver for social change in Scotland.

These examples are just the tip of the iceberg of the kind of progress that can be made by a strong anti-poverty network coming together to call for change. But we know there is so much more left to do. Stagnant wages, increased costs of living and working age benefits remaining frozen, despite prices rising by 3%, are hitting low income families the hardest. With child poverty and food insecurity once again on the rise in Scotland, we remain committed to working with organisations large and small, people with lived experience of poverty, faith groups, trade unions, and the public and private sectors to drive real change.

We know that working together can make progress and bring real change to people's lives. The power of a strong network should not be underestimated. - Challenge poverty in Scotland? Aye, WE can!

Anela Anwar, Oxfam Scotland and Convenor of the Poverty Alliance



## Opening Doors, Gaining Confidence



Poverty Alliance along with other organisations gave me the opportunity to do this. I was soon working with The Joseph Rowntree Foundation and SCVO as well as the Poverty Alliance.

As part of a campaign with SCVO and The Daily Record, called 'The Poverty Storm' we won a Gold Award at The Scottish Pride Awards for the Not-for-Profit Campaign. The event was amazing, and I was so proud to be a part of it.

My proudest moment however was standing up in the Garden Lobby in Parliament telling everyone my story and my struggles as a single parent. I felt so honoured to be there and this fuelled that fire in my belly even more.

A few years on and I am still involved with the Alliance and do activist work when I can. I am at college studying Social Science and this is all thanks to the support from the Alliance and Peter and Fiona. They opened the doors and gave me the opportunities to grow as a person and gain confidence and self-esteem through the experiences and opportunities given to me.

I have just received an offer to study Public Sociology at QMU which will allow me to study sociology and social policy further and hopefully gain a job in this field later.

Looking forward for me ... things can only get better. I am currently a single parent working for minimum wage and studying at college, I hope once I have my degree I will be able to get a better paid job and things will be easier for me.

Thinking about single parents however, things look bleak. With the benefit cap and the introduction of universal credit, I feel life for single parents and low-income families will get worse. The cost of living is rising but the rate of benefit is not rising to match it, which is causing far too many families to be living in poverty and struggling daily.

Hazel Ratcliffe, community activist and social science student

I worked with Fiona from Poverty Alliance with a team of peer researchers from Fife Gingerbread on a project focusing on lone parents in Fife in 2013-2014. The research project took around 18 months and at times was challenging and emotional but for me was an extremely rewarding project. Fiona and the team at Poverty Alliance supported us every step of the way which was hugely appreciated. I began the project with very low self esteem and no confidence at all but with the support from Poverty Alliance and the peer support, I slowly came out my shell. Our research was published in a report 'Surviving Poverty: The Impact of Lone Parenthood' and we reported our findings in a conference style event to a huge audience.

I was shocked but proud of myself for being able to stand up in front of a group of professionals telling our story and the story of hundreds of families around Fife. The media began to show interest in our report and our findings and I soon seen myself talking to journalists for newspapers, radio and Scottish news channels. This set off a 'fire in my belly' and I wanted to do more. Poverty Alliance allowed this by inviting me to attend as a guest speaker at events that were discussing poverty and campaigning for change. If my story could help other single parents in Fife, then I wanted to shout it from the roof tops.

## Poverty is a political choice



Congratulations to the Poverty Alliance on its 25th Birthday, from UNISON, Scotland's largest trade union.

UNISON Scotland is delighted to be a long standing partner of the Poverty Alliance, because like all trade unions we understand the value of solidarity. While we, and many other organisations, campaign in our own way for the elimination of poverty, we are that much stronger when we come together with a common voice.

While poverty in Scotland has fallen slightly over the past 20 years, still one in five people in Scotland lives in poverty, according to the main poverty indicator. The biggest progress has been the fall in poverty among pensioners, a welcome development that has happened thanks to the sort of political action the Poverty Alliance has campaigned for.

Poverty remains highest amongst families with children (particularly lone parents) and that is also sadly true for those of working age. The poverty rate for working-age adults has remained broadly the same for 20 years, despite improvements in the National Minimum Wage and the development of the Scottish Living Wage. It reminds us that wages alone will not address poverty for working families, it requires an effective social security system as well.

While workless households suffer the highest levels of poverty, there has been an increase in poverty rates among households where one person is in work. The OBR forecasts that came with the recent UK budget, show a sharp reduction in their wages forecast since March. Again, this is not an accident, but a political choice. They point out that government interventions will ultimately be borne by workers.

The really scary part of the OBR forecast is the impact on household income. They calculate that household gross debt, secured and unsecured, will increase to around 150% of income by 2023. What little economic growth that the government is hoping for, will be built on a mountain of growing household debt.

This makes the campaign, spearheaded by the Poverty Alliance, for the Scottish Living Wage, all the more important. More than a thousand Scottish employers are now accredited to the Scottish Living Wage. This is the real living wage, unlike the UK government version that isn't linked to living costs and openly discriminates against younger workers under 25 years of age.

However, one in five workers still earn less than the Scottish Living Wage. Big progress has been made in the public sector and in social care, but in sectors like hospitality and catering, wages remain low. Often exacerbated by poor terms and conditions and insecure contracts.

The elimination of poverty requires real change in Scotland. This is firstly a battle of ideas, and the Poverty Alliance plays a key role in developing policy. That leads to the radical action, promoted by the practical actions and campaigns that the Poverty Alliance so often leads.

So, let's celebrate the anniversary and commit to redoubling our efforts to eliminate poverty. And remember, in a rich country poverty isn't an accident, it's a political choice that we can change.

Dave Watson, Head of Policy and Public Affairs, UNISON Scotland



## Meeting the Challenges Ahead

At the University of Warwick, I just finished teaching a module called Social Theory for Social Justice. In this module, masters students and I explore different theories of social justice and examine how they might translate into real world policy and practice contexts. This year, in our discussions about the politics of redistribution, I used the Poverty Alliance as an example focusing particularly on its Living Wage and Stick Your Labels campaigns. These campaigns are important as they demonstrate how civil society organisations working with grassroots activists might materially and symbolically help to transform the lives of people with experiences of poverty. Indeed, the Poverty Alliance can proudly claim that in a context of falling real wages and rising inflation, its Living Wage campaign has helped to at least stabilise the incomes of the poorest workers. The Stick Your Labels campaign has helped to shift public perceptions of how we construct the lives of people living in poverty and how our political imagination informs who we think of as worthy of respect. The Alliance shows how a strong grounding in egalitarian social democratic politics can inform public debate and influence policymaking for the most marginalised groups in Scottish society.

However, big challenges lay ahead. The roll back of the welfare state continues apace with stagnant wages and falling living standards for all but the richest households. Unless the disastrous and counter-productive austerity measures are reversed, we can expect rising levels of poverty and immiseration for many households. Under austerity, it is not only that the welfare state shrinks but hard won social citizenship rights—such as the right to housing, to healthcare and to education—are fatally weakened as well. Certainly, contemporary anti-poverty politics must be focused on subverting the brutal privatisations and cut backs of the welfare state as well as making new arguments for the expansion of welfare. The thirty-year experiment with neoliberalism has failed. Austerity has failed. And now, alongside the existing economic crisis, we have a new crisis facing us with Brexit and the inevitable economic shock this will entail in leaving the European Union.



The outlook ahead is gloomy but the Poverty Alliance, along with other anti-poverty organisations and activists must continue to argue for and to win a new world with a different social and economic order with justice and equality at its heart.

Professor Akwugo Emejulu, University of Warwick.

## Solidarity and Generosity

The Poverty Alliance has been a 'go-to' organisation for me throughout my career, providing invaluable information, advice and guidance on any matters relating to poverty in Scotland. But the aspect of the organisation that I have most appreciated is the 'alliance'.

The Poverty Alliance is distinct from any other campaigning organisation, coalition, umbrella organisation or partnership that I have worked with. Its main strengths lie in the broad spectrum of people and interests that have been brought together to form the alliance, and the open way in which they enable those people to participate. They enable voices to be heard that otherwise could be ignored or stifled.

Through the Poverty Alliance I have met with trade unionists, community activists, academics, civil servants, solidarity groups, politicians, charities, local government officials, businesses and more. Within these discussions, we haven't always agreed about how things should be done or what the priorities for action are – but I have always known that we shared the same aim of combatting poverty in Scotland. It has been the Poverty Alliance that has also ensured that I've been aware of the bigger picture. Many of us tend to focus our campaigns on specific issues or particular groups of people. The Poverty Alliance has supported those campaigns, but has also played an important role in placing those campaigns within a broader context.

The two main qualities of the Poverty Alliance that I have valued most have been their solidarity and their generosity. Whether it be campaigning on the streets, in the Parliament or in the press; the Poverty Alliance has always been there, standing with us and amplifying our voices. The generosity of the Poverty Alliance has been demonstrated most to me at the times when they use the platforms they create and the positions of influence they hold, and open that out to others.

These qualities have led to the Poverty Alliance achieving change to policies and practice that have made a direct impact on peoples' lives. The work on the Living Wage has been particularly significant. Thousands of workers across Scotland are taking



home more money because of the persistence and the persuasiveness of the Living Wage campaign. I'm not sure that any other organisation could have achieved the same impact because few other organisations have the same breadth of people that they can bring together.

Over the past 25 years, in the midst of ever changing political, economic and constitutional contexts, the Alliance has tailored its approach accordingly. Attention has been drawn to the impact of policy decisions, evidence has been gathered and solutions have been offered. That work will continue to be required in the years to come.

Part of the challenge will be to keep things fresh and avoid the temptation to slip into well-rehearsed debates that entrench positions rather than breaking through to open up new possibilities. The best way to do that will be to continue to maintain a broad alliance that is connected to communities and enables voices to be heard.

Douglas Hamilton, Chair of the Poverty and Inequality Commission



## The Changing Face of Poverty



The face of poverty in Scotland is changing. If we were to say that a young person has job and that they are living in their own rented flat, would you think of this young person as being in danger of living in poverty? You might remember this period of your own life fondly; gaining your independence and having your own money are exciting times.

But, according to The New Policy Institute, this is the new face of poverty in Scotland.

And it is unacceptable. While this newer face of poverty isn't always easy to see, the implications for those affected and for our society are the same. Poverty limits young people's options and opportunities which has a significant impact on their future prosperity and quality of life, and robs Scotland's communities and economy of much-needed talent.

The reasons that more young people are facing poverty isn't surprising when we consider some of the changes that have taken place in recent years.

Young people have been hit hard by some of the changes in welfare policy. People under the age of 25 receive lower rates of benefits, despite evidence that their needs are not any different from older people.

Rates of unemployment for young people remain too high and for those young people who have a job, their first experiences of the world of work are not always good. They will often be working in low paid jobs – 66 per cent of people aged 18-21 earn less than the

Living Wage. Many of those jobs will be the so-called "gig economy" - characterised by temporary or zero hours work. And, remember, young people under 25 are not entitled to the legal national living wage.

Combined with inflation, rising rents and the near impossible dream for young people to save enough money to put down a deposit on their own home, it's no wonder young people in employment are facing poverty. Naomi Eisenstadt's 2017 report, 'The Life Chances of Young People in Scotland' for the Scottish Government was a pivotal moment for everyone working to end youth poverty. It is a sobering read. Acknowledging the scale of the issue is just the start – we need to move into action.

The Poverty Alliance has always recognised the challenges that young people face. In the 1990s they set up the Youth Poverty Action Project that worked with young people to identify the issues that were important to them. The project helped give young people a voice and campaign directly for change.

More recently the Alliance has worked with young people in Stirling making the transition from school into work and further education. They have also carried out research with young people in Glasgow that has helped reshape the way that housing services are delivered for young people.

All these projects reflect a consistent theme over the last 25 years of the Poverty Alliance's work: bringing the voices of those with direct experience – the real codesign experts - into debates about how we shape policy and services. A statement we wholeheartedly endorse here at Young Scot.

2018 in Scotland is the Year of Young People – where we will celebrate young Scots, but also seek to make even more progress in the journey towards Scotland being the best place in the world to grow up. Whether it is making sure that more young people receive the real Living Wage, or that our social security system addresses the needs of young people, the Year of Young People 2018 offers a powerful catalyst for change – we join with the Alliance in calling for us all to recommit to putting them at the heart of the work to end poverty in Scotland.

Louise Macdonald OBE, Chief Executive, Young Scot

## 'Poverty is the Worst Form of Violence'



I have had the pleasure of working with Poverty Alliance colleagues since 2011 when I became Director of One Parent Families Scotland. We have collaborated on a number of issues and campaigns such as Free School Meals, the Scottish Campaign on Welfare Reform and participated in events such as the Poverty Assembly.

Many of us work with particular ground who are affected by poverty e.g. children, single parents, people with disabilities. The Poverty Alliance works with all groups of people affected by poverty which brings its own challenges but also allows them to highlight that which is common to all - the grinding impact of living without enough money and all the effects that has on every aspect of life for example housing, education, employment, health and well-being. It helps create a sense of collective endeavour to tackle poverty and connects people and groups across issues and means that they do not feel alone in their experience. At the same time, the ethos and principles of the Poverty Alliance mean that the work recognises the structural and political choices which lead to people living in poverty thus not individualising the issue which leads to blaming people living in poverty for being poor.

For us at OPFS, working with the Poverty Alliance has been a natural choice – the tackling poverty at a structural level; always been led by the experiences of people directly affected by poverty; focusing on the issues that matter to the people on the ground; collaborating and working together rather than competing for scant resources and

funding – these are all part of an ethos which we share.

In 2011, when I returned to work in Scotland after an absence of 13 years, the welfare reform bill bringing in some of the most pernicious changes to the social security system was making its way through Westminster. Single parents were one of the groups most directly affected by the changes to benefit conditionality and cuts across the benefit system. As an organisation, we campaigned on specific issues but it was through the Scottish Campaign on Welfare Reform that our voices were amplified and the power of collective action came to the fore. Through its key role in coordinating and supporting SCoWR at the time, The Poverty Alliance helped bring together over xx organisations to campaign on the principles of a fair and just social security system which had eradicating poverty at its heart. The Poverty Alliance, along with others has continued to campaign for social security to contribute to poverty eradication and this work has taken on greater significance with devolution of some social security benefits and powers.

The challenges ahead such as the forecast increases in poverty, continuing welfare changes and cuts, the levels of destitution and despair we are seeing in our communities can appear insurmountable at times, but I am encouraged by what we have been able to achieve to date by working together as individuals, communities and organisations. What we need to do is create the time and space for network locally where people can come together and combine their resources to support each other and tackle the causes and impact of poverty. Something which the Poverty Alliance has a proud history of doing and will continue to be needed to do so for the foreseeable future

Satwat Rehman, Director, One Parent Families Scotland



## Needed More than Ever

'Are you passionate about social justice? Do you want to put the fight against poverty and inequality at the heart of political debate in Scotland?' This was the strap line for a recent recruitment ad for the Poverty Alliance. I'm not applying for the job! But as someone who is passionate about social justice and who has spent a lifetime with others trying to put poverty and inequality at the heart of political debate, I salute the Poverty Alliance on its 25th birthday.

My time as the first Donald Dewar Visiting Professor of Social Justice at Glasgow University a decade ago was enriched by the opportunity it gave me to collaborate with the Alliance. In particular, they organised, with the Scottish Executive, a workshop to explore the implications for policy and practice of the 'othering' of people living in poverty. I had applied the concept of othering to people in poverty in a book on the concept of poverty. In essence it refers to the various ways in which people experiencing poverty are treated as different to the rest of society – as 'Other' and as inferior. It draws a line between 'us' and 'them' so that we no longer see 'them' as individuals and fellow equal citizens but instead look down on them and stereotype them as 'the poor'. This process operates at both an inter-personal and at an institutional level and it is often reinforced by media representations and by language which has deep historical roots.

So much of the Alliance's work has represented a challenge to the othering of people in poverty, notably its attempts to change public attitudes through the Stick Your Labels Campaign, which emerged from a working group in which people with experience of poverty were actively involved. This campaign is premised on appreciation of the damaging effects stigmatising language can have on public perceptions of poverty. The importance to people in poverty themselves of being treated with dignity and respect was one of the clearest messages to emerge from work the Alliance undertook for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to ensure that 'the voices and experiences of those living on low incomes in Scotland' fed into JRF's anti-poverty research.



Recognition of the dignity of people in poverty lies at the heart of a human rights approach, which the Alliance has also championed. It is heartening to see explicit recognition that social security is a human right and the principle of 'respect for the dignity' of individuals' enshrined in the Scottish social security legislation. Indeed the very use of the term social security rather than welfare makes a welcome change these days. The Scottish Government's emphasis on learning from the expertise borne of experience chimes very much with the approach the Alliance has consistently championed. The recent passing, with cross-party support, of the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act, which re-establishes the measures and targets abandoned by the UK government, is another example of where Westminster can learn from Edinburgh.

Yet, as in the rest of the UK, the outlook is grim for Scottish social security claimants because they are not immune to cuts, notably the four year freeze of most working-age benefits. The Institute for Fiscal Studies and Resolution Foundation have identified these as the main driver of a projected significant increase in child poverty and inequality. I fear the work of the Poverty Alliance is needed more than ever.

Baroness Ruth Lister, Member of the House of Lords and Emeritus Professor of Social Policy, Loughborough University.

## More than Numbers

When we first started grappling with poverty, almost 20 years ago, it was through what the official statistics allowed us to say about the subject.

Any definition of poverty that is about having too few resources to be able to follow 'ordinary living patterns, customs and activities' can't but help depend on statistics. What's 'ordinary' can only be found out from surveys while the extent to which some people lack the necessary resources needs data on income and assets.

Statistics are also good at showing how things are changing, essential wherever supposed common-sense, even well-meaning, is out-of-date.

For many years, in-work poverty was simply ignored because it just didn't fit the mantra that work was the route out of poverty. Nowadays, for much the same reason, it is the strength of the link between ill-health or disability on the one hand and poverty on the other that is downplayed. As 'awkward facts', statistics can help counter this.

Yet if statistics can be powerful elements when telling stories about poverty, which stories to tell and how to tell them requires an understanding that must come from somewhere else.

That 'somewhere else' is the experience of poverty, whether directly felt or through immediate and prolonged proximity to it. Although we have worked across the UK, it is the network of community, voluntary, trade union, research and local government organisations with (so it seems to us) their centre of gravity in West Central Scotland who have that knowledge and who have provided us with that insight need to make sense of, and weave sensible stories around, our evidence. The Poverty Alliance sits at the heart of this network.

It was at Scottish Assembly for Tackling Poverty where we first saw and felt the anger of people as they endured the switch from IB to ESA. Numbers show scale but they don't show how it feels or whether it matters.

Likewise, listening to first-hand accounts of being sanctioned confirmed that the statistics mattered.



Statistics make good headlines but it's people and public attitudes that exercise politicians. Big numbers which are known to matter to those affected can be a powerful combination.

The research we undertook with the Poverty Alliance into why employers choose to pay the Living Wage has helped understand employers' decisions and what might induce them to act differently. This would not have been possible without the networks the Poverty Alliance has with employers.

Looking forward, the loose association that the Poverty Alliance and the wider circle around it represent provides a democratic space in which quite different perspectives on this broad subject can interact with one-another in creative way. The intermingling of different forms of knowledge that this allows is as rare as it is precious.

It is not just Scotland but the rest of the UK that benefits too. Although this reflects weakness elsewhere, amplified by the invigorating effect of a government committed to reducing poverty, any widening of the network would be for the good.

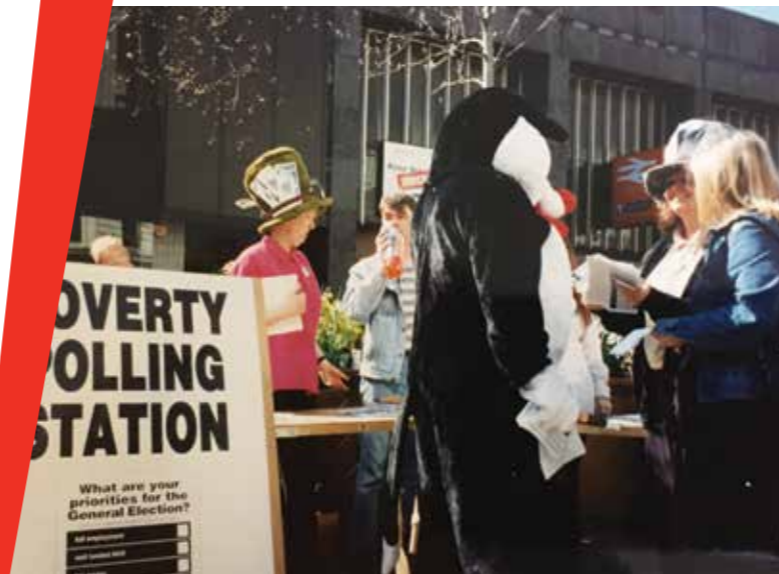
The immediate threat is Brexit. Statistics about the UK's ageing population makes continued substantial inward migration by working-age people an economic necessity. The danger with this after Brexit is that some may seek to create a divide between a home-grown poor and one made up of migrants and their families. Being ready and able to resist this before it gains much traction is going to be crucial.

Dr Peter Kenway, Director, New Policy Institute





# YEARS OF WORKING TOGETHER TO COMBAT POVERTY IN SCOTLAND





## Human Rights and Poverty



My first direct encounter with the Poverty Alliance was back in 1996 when I was working with Oxfam to scope out whether or not they would expand their domestic anti-poverty work into Scotland. Damien Killeen was at the helm and was very supportive.

But I'd known about the organisation before then - from the very start it had a hard-hitting and uncompromising attitude which both sought to serve the interests of people living in poverty and hold policy makers to account for their decisions.

And that focus was at the start very necessary. And it remains so. From my perspective back then the Poverty Alliance was fulfilling a huge need to bring people and organisations together, help them create a collective agenda and voice that highlighted the issues facing people who are poor, bring effective challenge for change and then act to ensure that voice was heard. 25 years on while significant progress has been made there is still much to do. The Experience Panels of the Scottish Government's Social Security process serve as good evidence that the oft-conveyed message about the need to, and effectiveness of, bringing in experts by experience has been heard. Sadly though the on-going and devastating cuts to welfare and the systematic stigmatisation of people who are poor shows us the journey we have still to make.

And times have not always been easy for the organisation over the years. Some would know better than I but there have been a number of occasions when the threat of the doors shutting was unnervingly close. Which in itself is a testament to the tenacity and commitment of members, staff and board members through the years to keep presenting good propositions to funders while not compromising on the goals of the organisation.

Looking forward - in my current role as Chair of the Scottish Human Rights Commission I am delighted to know that the Board of the Poverty Alliance has endorsed the organisation taking a rights-based approach. In so many respects it always has but making that explicit in word and deed will help strengthen the organisation's goals and processes and further empower those it works with. As the Poverty Alliance celebrates 25 years of endeavour this year, next year the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will be 70 years old. The universal values it declares and its enduring relevance will only support and encourage those the Poverty Alliance seeks to support and strengthen. As Eleanor Roosevelt said 'without concerted citizen action to uphold these rights at home we will not see progress in the wider world'.

Judith Robertson, Chair, Scottish Human Rights Commission

## Still Around:

## Poverty and the Poverty Alliance

Twenty-five years ago I had lived more years than I have since lived (just). Scotland had qualified for its first ever European football Championships final tournament. I didn't have a tummy that spilled over my waistline. I could climb stairs and talk at the same time. I didn't have any grey hairs.

But it wasn't all good news back then.

There were lots we didn't know about poverty. Indeed, disaggregated data providing robust estimates of the number of people living in poverty in Scotland would not be available until 1994/95. Although it had been more than five years since Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher had opined that there was "no such thing as society" in an interview for *Women's Own*, and a few years since she was replaced as PM by John Major, it was not at all commonplace to be talking about poverty at the time.

It later transpired that worse was to come.

In the latter years of the 20th Century, the rate of poverty in Scotland crept up to over 1.2 million people by 1996/97, or 25% of all people living in Scotland (33% of children, 19% of working aged adults and 33% of pensioners).

If the numbers were bad, the strategies for dealing with them were almost non-existent.

Scotland didn't have a national strategy for tackling poverty, which is not surprising as it would be a few more years before devolution would become a reality. So, there were no Scottish targets to reduce child poverty, no Scottish Poverty and Inequality Commission, and no independent Advisor on Poverty and Inequality. Many local authorities in Scotland did not have a local anti-poverty strategy.

So, the forward-thinking that led to the formation of the Poverty Alliance was most welcome back in 1992. While no-one would claim that the subsequent transformation of the political and cultural landscape in Scotland, which means that tackling poverty is now much more central to our national (and local) sense of purpose is solely attributable to the Poverty Alliance, it has without any



doubt led the way. Most importantly, it has championed the voice and experience of people experiencing poverty. Experts on poverty come in many guises and without the principles, commitment, support and expertise of the Poverty Alliance, the voices of people experiencing poverty in Scotland would be much less prominent in debates and strategies to tackle this pernicious problem that afflicts us all. Whether in person, in print or in podcast, the Poverty Alliance has been the champion of the voice of experienced poverty in Scotland. Our understanding of poverty in Scotland is all the richer for reports, such as Mhoraig Green's *Voices of People Experiencing Poverty in Scotland in 2007*, and Fiona McHardy's more recent work on *Surviving Poverty - The Impact of Lone Parenthood. Research into Experiences of Lone Parents in Rural Fife*, and the many more others beside.

The Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit of Glasgow Caledonian University looks forward to strengthening our working relationships as the Poverty Alliance works toward its golden jubilee. It would be wonderful if we weren't around in 2042, but while we aspire to work ourselves out of existence, in the meantime, there is much work to be done in a Scotland where more working aged adults are living in poverty now than twenty-five years ago, where more than one-in-four children live with poverty, and where far too many of our older citizens don't get to enjoy their later years in a poverty-free existence.

Professor John McKendrick, Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit, Glasgow Caledonian University



## Understanding the Bigger Picture



I became involved with the Poverty Alliance in my role as Head of Programmes at STAR Project. As a community organisation of 18 years standing we had a significant wealth of lived experience to draw upon. We wanted, and felt we had a responsibility, to add our voices to the many highlighting the causes and impact of poverty.

Initially my relationship was with outreach, a response to the call for evidence in relation to welfare reform, facilitating the documenting of real life case studies and joining a collective voice for change. I immediately valued the methodology, meaningful conversations and relevant, reliable information. This reciprocal relationship is so important in the community, where even well-meaning consultation can be intrusive and without explicit purpose, or feedback. The Poverty Alliance empowers by generating understanding of the bigger picture, they test desirability of emerging priorities, making shared decisions on action. The loudest voice at PA is that of lived experience, traveling to where people are, listening until understanding and documenting evidence with respect and sensitivity - all the while being suitably angry and irrepressible, in a professional way!

Poverty Alliance offers a lively and rewarding network, with a variety of platforms and depths. On-going dialogue with community activists, politicians, community development teams, 3rd Sector organisations, local authorities, invested individuals, the exceptional staff team - all contributes to their strength. The most powerful

work is done when each expert voice is around the same table and Poverty Alliance as a coalition nail this time and time again; deeper understanding of issues, impact, needs and solutions which travel back to local communities, groups, organisations and authorities. Events and conferences are valuable with a 360 viewpoint, this is further evident in the insightful and useful publications, the vision of work, the agreeing of priorities and the relentless activism, this working the network approach underpins the very being of the Poverty Alliance.

Relationship building with such a variety of partners on a national platform brings with it increasing challenges. Organisations of all kinds face cuts, limited capacity, need for firefighting priorities - arguably at a time when we have never needed the work of Poverty Alliance more, or indeed the peer support for those involved as we step into this uncertain future.

The current profile of poverty, employability, low income, inclusive growth, devolution, potentially gives great opportunity for mixed, new partnerships and innovative solutions, yet finding a significant space in a diary for an event that demands time for relationship based working is not easy, either to create or to justify - or is it?

In essence, we must stay true to our approach as we name our challenge. Embracing digital opportunity and smart communications but at a pace that works for our whole network, perhaps we look at existing tools and assets in our membership with fresh eyes, cascading some of our work, shared campaigning, larger networks with local, connected ambassadors? Working together to create our strong vision of a good society, and to sharpen how we articulate this across partnership boundaries we haven't crossed in the last 25 years, developing our language to discuss this vision and how we co-produce its colossal and universal value, and then do we create significant space in our diaries? It would be impossible not to.

Emma Richardson, formerly Head of Programmes, Star Project

## Speaking Truth to Power

My involvement with the Poverty Alliance goes back to its own beginnings 20 years ago. I was the then Director of Lothian Anti-Poverty Alliance (LAPA) and the Alliance provided myself, and LAPA, with a lot of advice and support. Given their origins as Strathclyde Poverty Alliance they had a lot of practical experience in involving local people and getting local anti-poverty initiatives off the ground.

The Poverty Alliance were also keen to get LAPA involved in the work of the European Anti-Poverty Network and I recall that we sent a couple of local LAPA activists over to an EAPN meeting in Northern Ireland.

The Poverty Alliance's "bottom-up" approach to policy making is one that I have always agreed with, and tried to practice in my own work - that is that the best solutions to tackling poverty come from those living in poverty.

The Poverty Alliance has always been at its best when involving community activists in evolving, adopting and then lobbying for redistributive, anti-poverty policies. In fact I was so impressed with the Poverty Alliance's values and work back then that I accepted an invitation to join its board and served on it for a couple of years (I think) before a move in jobs prevented my ongoing involvement.

However even after moving on from anti-poverty work to working at Pilton Community Health project the Poverty Alliance remained a very helpful ally. We worked together with other anti-poverty groups and MSPs to push the issue of Free School Meals for all pupils up the policy agenda. That resulted in two Free School Meals Bills going through the Parliamentary process. Even though both were eventually unsuccessful they did convince the SNP to adopt a similar policy which has in turn led to the extension of Free School Meals provision to more children.

Over the last ten years whilst I've been at Inclusion Scotland I have been impressed by the Poverty Alliance's ongoing commitment to involving those living in poverty in their work. In particular they have made strenuous efforts to reach out to, and involve, disabled people.



That's been absolutely vital given that disabled people have been at the sharp end of austerity cuts and welfare "reform" (more cuts!).

I think that the Poverty Alliance has managed to perform a very difficult balancing act over the last 20 years. Being unafraid to "speak truth to power" and criticise successive Governments' lack of action in tackling poverty but also seeking out opportunities to work with Government when that might make a material difference to the lives of those living in poverty. That's probably encapsulated in the Poverty Alliance's successful Living Wage campaign which started out as a lobbying campaign and then received Scottish Government support.

I hope that the Poverty Alliance can continue to be a "voice for the voiceless" for some time to come. With a new Child Poverty Act and Poverty and Inequality Commission coming there's a lot to play for. Let's prove that by working together we can make a difference.

Bill Scott, Director of Policy, Inclusion Scotland



## Collaborative Research for Change

There is an abundance of research, policy, and programme expertise on poverty and inequality in Scotland. What we are perhaps less good at is working across organisational and professional boundaries to develop research capacity, improve knowledge, or co-produce policy ideas. Over the past few years the world of research and the activities of universities have been changing. A commitment to evidence-based policy making dominates reforms to policy making, shaping research funding and government engagements with research partners. Correspondingly, universities across the UK, often driven by research funding requirements, are increasingly seeking to engage with 'non-academic audiences' and collaborate with third sector and public sector organisations involved in social policy. This new emphasis on collaborative research and knowledge exchange can be beneficial. It can open up new opportunities for policy makers, third sector organisations, and public bodies and at the same time new collaborative approaches might bring more diverse or less privileged citizens into academic spaces. However, for some this is a new way of working; university systems and research funders may need to adapt their existing processes, roles, and practices, and provide greater insight into research funding and academic culture.

It is vital that these collaborative developments create reciprocal and ethical working relationships across organisations and with citizens. This is especially important during times of financial pressures and increasing demands on organisations and practitioners who work to support individuals experiencing poverty. Ethical research collaborations require trust, time to align values, and an understanding of different expectations or demands. Working outside of our own professional fields and engaging with others, such as the Poverty Alliance team and members, goes beyond networking; it is about valuing and investing in relationships across areas of expertise and contributing to develop a 'community of knowledge' around understanding and reducing poverty.

Creating policy or research communities is not easy. Policy changes and service reforms may bring a new range of challenges. We need to value and invest in the skills to work collaboratively to address poverty.



Too often work place employment practices involve short-term or temporary employment positions, focus too heavily on internal organisational matters, or limit autonomous working, all of which can undermine efforts to develop the necessary relationships across boundaries that can enhance research or reduce poverty. Existing networks may also need to develop to take account of a wider range of social concerns. For example, the introduction of Universal Credit affects up to 8 million people in the UK and requires greater support for, and research on, issues of in-work poverty, low pay, and in-work conditionality. Existing networks thus need to support and connect with organisations or individuals experiencing issues such as in-work poverty to address research gaps and inform future social security reforms. Creating relationships across boundaries and investing in the time and skills required to collaborate well can build our collective capacity to address inequality and improve anti-poverty activities.

Dr Hayley Bennett, Research Fellow,  
University of Edinburgh

## A Commitment to Change

Over the last decade our organisation, the Conforti Institute has been an active member of the Poverty Alliance. We joined because we were drawn to the witness that was offered by the wider members, the inspirational work of the team at the Alliance and their leadership, and the alliance's uncompromising commitment to speak truth to power with dignity for change.

We are small, and by being part of this alliance we have been able to offer our voice to a collective voice. When we began to become involved and looked around us, we saw that this alliance had been doing those things that are lauded now but were a struggle to make happen in the past. It celebrated diversity, it nurtured dialogue, it gave voice to the voiceless and it built relationships of trust among diverse grassroots communities to help create a network for change.

The Alliance has enabled us to use robust evidence in our context to challenge injustice.

The capacity of the alliance to serve a network of groups in this way, enables us all to grow in confidence as we seek to question the assumptions that are presented to us as 'economic facts' and regain our capacity to be agents of change in our communities and networks.

Journeying with the Alliance has allowed us to seek real policy change in partnership with people from communities from across civil society. In meeting and sharing the vision with other members, our organisation has grown, has been challenged, and has been gifted with insight we could not possibly have achieved on our own. We learned from the Alliance that not one of us is as smart as all of us.

Collaborating in campaigning for real policy change that looks to improve the lives of people living in poverty has had a transformative effect, on those people we work with, our staff, and our organisation as a whole.

To campaign against injustice demands not only organisation but resilience and compassion, we have been grateful that we have caught these from our brothers and sisters across the Alliance in abundance.



As a small faith based charity when anyone looks to join, volunteer or partner with our organisation, one of the most important things we tell them from the outset is "We are a member of the Poverty Alliance."

Looking to the future, as an alliance we know we need to grow our membership, and build stronger and wider alliances with those who share our vision. Our priority remains evidence based, active campaigning for policy change that improves quality of life and nurtures human flourishing. Our future work must therefore engage and invite others to embrace a model of change that is, was, and always will be led by people with lived experience of poverty.

Hugh Foy, Head of Programmes, Conforti Institute



## Crafting a New Story About Poverty



This involves insisting that people themselves in poverty have a voice, to define their own concerns and priorities, as much as it involves the painstaking collation of evidence about both harm and about solution.

And thirdly we need to change the nature of the conversation. We need to find new ways of talking about poverty, engaging popular culture to craft a new story, one which does not tolerate poverty as simply collateral damage in our fast changing society, but instead an issue that affects all of us. And critically one that can be solved. The Poverty Alliance was heavily engaged with JRF LINK in changing attitudes to poverty, and showed just how powerful evidence, translated into action, can be when they delivered high impact poverty awareness training for public sector workers. They brought together people in poverty to assess and evaluate research findings and recommendations produced for JRF by academics, and by bringing together activists and organisations in the 2014 Scottish Assembly for Tackling Poverty did critical work in ensuring that the voice of people in poverty, and those supporting them, was heard with crystal clarity.

The Poverty Allowance uses its convening power to ensure that there is a shared purpose, a steely focus and significant impact at a time when too many are willing to walk on the other side. In doing this the Poverty Alliance plays a crucial role in the historic mission of so many organisations – to ensure that no one in the UK is destitute, and that poverty, and its attendant damage, is eradicated.

Julia Unwin CBE, Chair of the Inquiry into the Future of Civil Society and CEO of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2007-16

Civil society is sometimes described as the third sector and seen as somehow incidental to the resolution of social evils. The work of the Poverty Alliance in bringing together civil society organisations in a concerted way to solve poverty shows just how inadequate this description is. Voluntary organisations, trades unions, churches and faith groups work together through the Poverty Alliance to make a direct, and visible difference both to the lives of people in poverty, and to the long-term eradication of this scar on our society.

I identify three different types of engagement, which between them working together through the Alliance have the potential to transform society for good.

First of all, there is the enduring purpose of providing relief from poverty. Actually, providing the money, food, shelter, as well as the training and support that enables people to rebuild their lives. This is critical and without it families in poverty would be even more excluded and damaged.

But this level is not sufficient alone. The role of civil society, through the Poverty Alliance, in shining a very bright light on what is happening in the overlooked and forgotten parts of our society, is critical to achieving the solution that is so essential. Ensuring that poverty is not a hidden shame, but a publicly acknowledged disgrace, is a fundamental part of the role.

## Having All our Voices Heard



HUG (Action for Mental Health) have been working with The Poverty Alliance for quite a while now. I became a member of the Community Activist Action Group (CAAG) when I started to work for HUG back in April 2016. I have thoroughly enjoyed the regular meetings we have had.

Attending the CAAG meeting is important to HUG for several reasons. Firstly, it is anti poverty work and it gives HUG the opportunity to ensure that the voices of people with lived experience of mental illness and poverty are heard in a Scottish wide context. We know that many people experiencing mental ill health also experience poverty; they are more likely to be out of work, more likely to lose their jobs, more likely to struggle to find work than people who don't have mental ill health. We also know that people living with mental illness have been at the sharp end of the UK Government's welfare reform agenda and specifically the change over from DLA to PIP. Being part of the CAAG means that we can ensure the voices of our members are heard on these and many other issues and can help to influence policies and challenge inequality.

The CAAG also gives us an opportunity to contribute the voice of rural Scotland. Rural poverty is often hidden and the impact of rurality on poverty is not fully understood so having a Highland presence in these type of networks is vital if we are to reflect the wider experiences of people living in Scotland today.

So what does HUG gain from being part of this diverse group? Well, Diversity actually. Hearing from people with other health conditions and disabilities, single parents, refugees and asylum seekers, black and minority ethnic representatives, informs our own work, gives us a broader understanding of issues affecting all people facing discrimination and stigma and how mental illness fits as part of that picture. Networking, learning about initiatives that are happening elsewhere in Scotland and being part of the campaigns such as the Living Wage campaign mean that we are participating in practical steps to reduce poverty and improve lives.

It is particularly important that we share opportunities to work together, funding restrictions and budget cuts affect us all and if we can work together then we can overcome some of these issues to achieve better outcomes and better representation for the people we work with all across Scotland and internationally.

The imagination and passion in Scotland for a fairer better society can be seen throughout our third sector and it is tangible in this small group of activists. HUG is all about the collective voice and working with the Poverty Alliance gives us the opportunity for the voices of our members to be added to a Scotland wide collective which is working hard to change the face of poverty in Scotland. We think that's very important work indeed.

Sue Lyons, member of the Community Activist Advisory Group, Poverty Alliance



## Finding Common Purpose



My first experience of the Poverty Alliance came in 2013 when Standard Life was formally accredited as a Living Wage employer. Shortly after, I was invited to join the Scottish Living Wage Accreditation leadership group. The Living Wage movement is characterised by a positive, collaborative approach that I've come to associate with a range of work undertaken by the Poverty Alliance. From decent work and inclusive employment, to the poverty premium, on each topic the Poverty Alliance have reached out to different stakeholders to understand their position and involve them in discussions.

Like the Poverty Alliance, I believe strongly that the best, and most sustainable, solutions for big, systemic problems that society faces are best found through having a range of voices round the table, seeking to find common purpose.

It is Poverty Alliance's thoughtful, evidence-led approach that enables them to be a successful convenor and to help people with a range of perspectives of interests to find consensus. One of the major issues facing society in today's digital age is the increasing tendency for tribal groups to exist in echo chambers, where they are only really willing to speak to others who share the same views. The difficulty is that this approach means it's unlikely anyone will change their mind, or their approach.

Diversity is a key ingredient for innovation, and the Poverty Alliance's ability to convene different groups in a non-judgmental way, bringing those with lived experience of poverty to the same forum as senior business leaders will be crucial for the future. It enables momentum to build and is more likely to deliver sustainable solutions.

There are a number of trends that are of interest for the future. Low levels of trust in business provide an imperative to do things differently. There are a number of economic headwinds to contend, and high levels of poverty and inequality are no good for anyone. Auto enrolment, which is helping many more people save for their future through workplace pensions, also means more people now have money invested in companies. We know people expect this to be done responsibly, and everyone expects that the companies their money is invested should be considerate of their impact on society and the environment.

All of this provides a genuine opportunity. The Poverty Alliance is well placed to capitalise on these trends, and bring stakeholders with shared interests together to accelerate progress towards a better, and fairer, society. There is a widely held belief in this country that each generation should be enabled to lead better lives than the one before. This is at risk for the first time in a long time. It will be a difficult path to navigate, but if the Poverty Alliance can be the trusted body that acknowledges the potential of different sectors and different political hues, then it can play a leading role in helping us all to find the solution.

Sandy MacDonald, Head of Corporate Sustainability, Standard Life

## Fighting Poverty Across Europe

Europe is not a fixed entity; it has to be built. I first met the Poverty Alliance through the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN), when I was director of a Council of Europe initiative on Human Dignity and Social Exclusion. The initiative was part of developing the scope of the European Social Charter so that it better included rights to protection from poverty and social exclusion. The Poverty Alliance gave very useful input.

EAPN is a network of national networks, stronger together, most of us from member states of the EU, some not, such as Norway, Iceland and Serbia. The Poverty Alliance a strong and stable partner and influential in EAPN, most recently in promoting understanding of the 'living wage' to NGOs across Europe.

Our work with Poverty Alliance shows the value of networking in sharing experience and getting things done – and the challenges for all NGOs in a difficult political climate. EAPN UK launched an informal network, the Social Policy Task Force of UK NGOs (SPTF), to promote stronger policies against poverty in Europe. SPTF involved a range of organisations from across the UK and achieved advisory group status with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). We worked on both EU and UK social policy. Poverty Alliance was a leading contributor. One of the most challenging things we did was explain to civil servants what we meant by 'participatory' democracy and why it wasn't a threat but a complement to 'representative democracy' (through our voting system). DWP agreed to include people with experience of poverty in our meetings as 'experts by experience' – and usually expert in many other ways too! Our work was much more effective and we made progress on things like housing benefit.

The Poverty Alliance makes a strong contribution to the annual EU People with Experience of Poverty conference, an EU Presidency conference where people from across Europe meet with EU politicians and officials. EAPN UK is in a challenging time. Like many other advisory bodies, our SPTF did not long survive the change of government in 2010 and our advice was ignored about the practical problems (and solutions) of introducing Universal Credit. But we don't give up. And Poverty Alliance is campaigning hard. Now Brexit is our context.



The Poverty Alliance has supported excellent NGO workshops to raise awareness of the risks to social rights and standards and the need to lobby and campaign, with trades union partners, to bring about strong measures to prevent deterioration after the Repeal Bill. In or out of the EU, poverty and rights are a core challenge for the future of a Europe we want to live in.

EAPN UK contributes strongly to the European Social Policy agenda. Peter Kelly is a key member of EAPN Europe's Executive Committee where he has brought the Poverty Alliance's experience to support EAPN through a period of great change. We have had some successes in defending the EU anti-poverty instruments, but we have struggled against the austerity mindset of governments and most especially against so much of the burden of bail-outs falling on those who have the least already.

We are focused on the adequacy (or lack of it) of minimum incomes. These are the means-tested incomes of last resort. In partnership, we are engaged in the European Minimum Income Network (<https://emin-eu.net/>), campaigning for a common European understanding and realisation of adequate minimum incomes. As part of our UK programme, the Poverty Alliance is holding policy seminars for Scottish NGOs, trades unions and policy officials, looking at different aspects of adequate minimum incomes and how they may be achieved. In England we are hosting the European EMIN bus journey, to share experience with our colleagues from other countries and we are organising grass-roots discussion groups to feed into our policy 'asks' ready for our final conference in October 2018. We hope you will want to get involved in EMIN.

Dr Katherine Duffy is UK representative on the EAPN EU Social Inclusion Group



## Progress is Possible

It was Dumbarton. It was December 1993. And it was very wet. The first time I was at a Poverty Alliance meeting. The issue that day was how to address the crisis of youth unemployment, in the shadow of a recession when much of Strathclyde had barely recovered from the previous one. I was a new researcher with the Commission on Social Justice at IPPR in London, keen to hear the voices of young people in poverty. Wind forward 25 years – and pinch yourself. Poverty Alliance are still here, hosting respectful dialogue with people and places experiencing poverty, struggling with frozen wages and benefits and rising costs. Based on these snap shots, it would look like not much had changed over the period.

Yet, the first quarter century of Poverty Alliance has seen major changes occur in Scotland – a major and sustained drop in poverty for older people, the growth of child poverty reversed and on a downward trend for almost 20 years, alongside the rise of in-work poverty. Progress is possible, the challenges of poverty change as well as endure, and we need partners like the Poverty Alliance to work alongside people facing the toughest times.

The Scottish Assembly for tackling poverty and Challenge Poverty Week have become essential points in the year to raise awareness and support participation. And the work of Poverty Alliance to drive accreditation of the voluntary Living Wage has been a triumph – more than 1,000 employers accredited and many more thousands to go, but a genuine tribute to the skill and persistence of Peter Kelly and his team.

Looking ahead, there is no shortage of work to do if Scotland is to stop the unravelling of hard earned progress. While much of the policy advocacy work has to be done at the Scottish and UK level – on social security, housing, employment and the cost of essentials – there is no substitute for relationship-building at the local level and with communities of interest. That's what the Poverty Alliance does so well. We will need another 25 years – but hopefully no more than that – of its graft, influencing and advocacy.

Jim McCormick, Associate Director  
Scotland, Joseph Rowntree Foundation



## Real Change on the Ground



Working with Poverty Alliance has been absolutely central to Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG)'s activity since establishing our Scotland office in 1999. On joining CPAG to head up CPAG in Scotland one of my first meetings was with Peter Kelly. From that first meeting in a café in Edinburgh I have been struck by the Alliance's ability to bring together organisations and individuals from across Scotland, to share both expertise and direct experience in the common cause of ending poverty.

Our work together has included many campaigns and some very real wins for low income families and their children. Years campaigning on free school meals together – in Parliament, at party conferences, in meetings with officials, with Ministers and future Ministers and out on the streets - led to extended entitlement for some working families in 2007, and the eventual roll out of universal free school lunches in the early years of primary from 2015.

Bringing together Poverty Alliance's work with people with direct experience of the old social fund alongside CPAG welfare rights expertise was instrumental in persuading the Scottish Government to establish, and invest in, the Scottish Welfare Fund, putting in statute a national scheme supporting individuals and families in crisis that has been lost elsewhere in the UK.

More recently our work together with other members of End Child Poverty to persuade the Scottish Government, and all the Holyrood parties, to introduce and pass the Child Poverty (Scotland) Bill has put in place clear targets and accountability that creates a framework for ending child poverty, again now sorely missing at UK level.

In all these campaigns we have shared a mission to end poverty in Scotland, but just as importantly we have shared values and an openness to working together with others. Finding the common ground and drawing on different types of expertise and experience to make the case for change has been central to the successes we can collectively look back on. What's more it's been a genuine pleasure working with Poverty Alliance staff and activists over the years.

Looking ahead, UK cuts to social security, stagnating wages, the ongoing squeeze on local and national budgets in Scotland and a forecast explosion in levels of child poverty mean we now face greater challenges than ever.

But we can draw on our experiences of real success in the past to give us encouragement for our future work together – for our shared Give Me Five Campaign for a top up to child benefit, for our work together in the Scottish Campaign on Welfare Reform to influence the development of devolved social security and challenge cuts at UK level, and for our work in End Child Poverty to ensure the legislative framework of the Child Poverty Bill translates into real change on the ground.

John Dickie, Director, Child Poverty  
Action Group Scotland



## Supporting Connected Communities



The work of The Poverty Alliance is as important now as it has been for the previous 25 years and Challenge Poverty Week this year felt like a catalyst for the beginning of real change. We have to believe and work together across the whole of Scotland to tackle poverty, it really is a problem that effects us all but it is also one that we can all do something about.

In communities across Scotland people make efforts every day to tackle poverty and to create better lives for themselves and their families despite the difficulties they may face. Communities that have previously been typecast as “disengaged” or “hard-to-reach” need to be appreciated for the treasure troves of skills, passion and commitment that they are, and that the people living in those communities have just as much to offer as the rest of us and are certainly as capable. As professionals working with and in these communities, we must stand alongside people and support them to create local solutions to the situations they face, not try to only fix things for them because it has been shown to be both unsustainable and unhealthy.

This isn't to say that national campaigning and targeted work with larger organisations and political parties isn't needed, but that we must re-focus a large amount of energy on the local and the immediate.

If we can support individuals in communities to connect together and share their skills and then support these communities to connect and share, we can begin to build a movement of real local democracy and can look at tackling the root causes of poverty whilst dispelling the stigmas surrounding it. This challenge of connecting people is the biggest one I think we face in the coming years – but we can do it if we make it fun and create space for local invention.

How do we do this? I think the best place to start is neighbour-to-neighbour conversations, and bringing the subject of poverty into these conversations. Asking people what they care about enough to act upon, and then giving them support to act upon it. If we can begin to do this we can grow civic strength and really get into tackling poverty across Scotland.

Anthony Morrow, Community Development Worker, Sanctuary Housing Association

## Create a Better Scotland? Aye, we can!



After almost four years, this is my last week working for the Poverty Alliance. I leave knowing much more than when I arrived, particularly about the steps that we need to take to build a better Scotland. Since I joined the Alliance in 2014, poverty in Scotland and the UK has continued to rise but I am also more certain than ever that it doesn't need to stay that way.

Working with the Poverty Alliance and third sector organisations across Scotland has opened my eyes to the extent of poverty across Scotland, but also to the solutions and the strength and resilience of individuals and communities.

This year was the fifth Challenge Poverty Week and more organisations than ever got involved, with over 150 activities taking place across the week.

These activities ranged from the Poverty Alliance's annual conference to a fun day in Priesthill, and at each event I attended I met people with a real drive and commitment to tackling poverty and making Scotland a better place to live for everyone.

I have been incredibly lucky to spend the past four years with the Alliance. My colleagues there are some of the most knowledgeable and dedicated anti-poverty campaigners in Scotland. Their belief that a better Scotland is possible has kept me going in the face of growing despair as the true impacts of welfare reform has become apparent.

Over the past few years, I've watched as my colleagues on the Living Wage team have increased the number of accredited employers in Scotland from 15 to over 1000. I've witnessed our research team produce reports that have been hugely influential in how we speak about issues relating to poverty, and I've seen our fieldwork team work with community activists who can deliver speeches 100 times more powerful than anything I could ever hope to say. On the policy and campaigns side, we have seen Stick Your Labels making real changes to the way organisations talk to and about people experiencing poverty, and have witnessed the discourse around social security change to talking about dignity and respect. We have also had a significant impact in the passage of important legislation such as the Child Poverty Act.

I know real change is possible because I've witnessed the Poverty Alliance deliver it, and as we watch the new Social Security Bill progress and the development of the new agency, organisations like the Poverty Alliance are more important than ever.

To paraphrase Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP, lobbyists do not always have a good name but Poverty Alliance are first rate champions, and as I move on I know I leave you in capable hands.

Carla McCormack, policy and parliamentary officer, Poverty Alliance





# MEMBERSHIP: JOIN US!

The Poverty Alliance is a national anti-poverty development agency for Scotland which seeks to combat poverty through collaborative action, bringing together workers and activists drawn from the public sector, voluntary organisations, community groups and other agencies.

The benefits of membership include regular mailings, Scottish Anti-Poverty Review, opportunities to become involved in working groups and access to a wide range of organisations and activists who have the potential to influence the direction of anti-poverty policy in the future.

The Alliance's wide range of activities provide many opportunities for members to exchange information and expertise which benefit the anti-poverty movement.

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name and designation of contact person: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name and address of organisation: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### MEMBERSHIP FEES:

FULL MEMBERSHIP: OPEN TO CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS: INCOME LESS THAN £50K: FREE | £50,000-£75,000: £50 | £75,000-£175,000: £75 | £175,000-£500,000: £100 | MORE THAN £500,000: £200

ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP: OPEN TO INDIVIDUALS, VOLUNTARY AND STATUTORY BODIES, AND PRIVATE SECTOR ORGANISATIONS\*: UNWAGED INDIVIDUALS: FREE | INDIVIDUALS: £25 | VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS: £25 | STATUTORY BODIES: £300

\*PLEASE CONTACT THE POVERTY ALLIANCE FOR DETAILS

I/We wish to apply for \*Ordinary/Associate Membership for the year: \_\_\_\_\_

\* Please delete as appropriate. NB Membership of The Poverty Alliance runs from 1st April to 31st March. Applications for new membership received after April 1st are charged on a pro rata basis.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send the completed application form to the address below - thank you.