

Policy and Sustainability Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 06 October 2020

Edinburgh Poverty Commission

Executive/routine
Wards
Council Commitments

1. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Policy and Sustainability Committee

- 1.1 Note the final report published by the Edinburgh Poverty Commission.
- 1.2 Express thanks and gratitude to the independent members of the Edinburgh Poverty Commission for leading the most comprehensive inquiry into poverty and its solutions ever conducted in any local authority area in Scotland, and in particular for the more than 600 hours of volunteer time they have committed to the work of the Commission.
- 1.3 Express thanks also to the over 70 organisations and 1,000 participants who took time to attend meetings, workshops, interviews, focus groups, and to submit the written evidence on which the Commission has based its findings.
- 1.4 Agree that the Council will commit to working towards the aim of ending poverty in Edinburgh by 2030 as defined by the four targets set by the Commission aiming that by 2030:
 - 1.4.1 No-one in Edinburgh needs to go without basic essentials they need to eat, keep clean, stay warm and dry;
 - 1.4.2 Fewer than one in people are living in relative poverty in Edinburgh at any given time;
 - 1.4.3 No-one in Edinburgh lives in persistent poverty; and
 - 1.4.4 No-one in Edinburgh experiences stigma due to their income.
- 1.5 Agree that the Council will work with the new End Poverty Edinburgh citizen group to ensure that the voices of people with experience of poverty continue to inform the way the Council plans and delivers services.

- 1.6 Agree to consider a comprehensive Council response to the final report of the Edinburgh Poverty Commission in December 2020. This response will take the form of a cross-council programme of work with clear commitments to Council action in the short, medium, and long term, and incorporating clear, measurable performance indicators.
- 1.7 Agree that the development of this response is supported with additional scrutiny by the Council's Adaptation and Renewal All Party Oversight Group.
- 1.8 Agree that, in doing so, the Adaptation and Renewal All Party Oversight Group adopts the remit of the Council's Poverty All Party Oversight Group and that, in line with proposed membership of that group, the Convener and/or Vice Convener of the Children and Education Committee are invited to all group discussions relating to poverty.

Andrew Kerr

Chief Executive

Contact: Chris Adams, Strategy Manager

E-mail: chris.adams@edinburgh.gov.uk | Tel: 0131 529 6258

Report

Edinburgh Poverty Commission

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This paper presents to committee the final report of the Edinburgh Poverty Commission.
- 2.2 The report proposes that Council commit, by December 2020, to agreeing a comprehensive programme of cross council actions in response to the findings of the Commission.

3. Background

- 3.1 In June 2018 City of Edinburgh Council agreed to support the launch of a new independent Edinburgh Poverty Commission and agreed that recommendations proposed by the commission will be used to inform the implementation of the Council Change Strategy. The launch of the Commission was similarly supported in June 2018 by the Edinburgh Partnership Board, with a commitment that the Commission findings would be used in the development and implementation of the Edinburgh Community Plan.
- 3.2 The Commission is an independent group made up of 12 people from a range of sectors and backgrounds, including citizens who have direct experience of living in poverty in Edinburgh. Jim McCormick, Associate Director Scotland for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, is the chair of the Edinburgh Poverty Commission, with Cllr Cammy Day as vice chair.
- 3.3 In October 2019 the Finance and Resources Committee approved the adoption of addressing poverty and sustainability as the policy priorities which will provide a focus for development of the Council's budget for 2020-23.
- 3.4 In November 2019, and in February 2020 the Policy and Sustainability Committee noted the emerging findings arising from the work of the Commission and, in advance of final recommendations, agreed that officers would work with Edinburgh Partnership colleagues and other stakeholders to develop specific joint actions and options on selected key findings identified in the interim reports.
- 3.5 In May 2020, the Policy and Sustainability Committee approved a report on the Council Adaptation and Renewal Programme guided by three priorities of poverty,

sustainability, and wellbeing, and noting the key role of Edinburgh Poverty Commission contributions to the development of this programme.

- 3.6 In June 2020, the Policy and Sustainability Committee received a report from the Edinburgh Poverty Commission on Poverty and Coronavirus in Edinburgh. This report was based on a short programme of interviews with citizens and organisations carried out over the first five weeks of the lockdown and other relevant findings from the commission's inquiry.

4. Main report

Progress to date

- 4.1 Edinburgh Poverty Commission was launched in November 2018 and over 18 months met 9 times in full session. During that period, the Commission held and took part in over 100 evidence sessions and project visits, met and heard from over 70 local organisations, commissioned significant new research into the experience of citizens living on low incomes and attitudes to poverty across the city and in total heard from more than 1,000 individual participants.
- 4.2 Taken together the Commission believes that this work represents the single most comprehensive city wide conversation on poverty ever conducted in Edinburgh, or any other local authority in Scotland. Meeting this objective has involved considerable support and engagement from citizens, from third sector and voluntary organisations, as well as from Council and partner agency officers and staff. Most of all, the work of the Commission has depended heavily on the continued commitment and leadership provided by its 12 independent commission members, who have collectively contributed well over 600 hours of volunteer time to the progress of this inquiry.
- 4.3 In the midst of drafting the final Edinburgh Poverty Commission report in March this year the lockdown to limit the impact of Covid-19 was imposed. The Commission decided to delay publishing the final report and in the meantime re-connect with many of the people and organisations it had met previously to hear what was happening across the city, to listen to concerns, fears and hopes and reflect on what this crisis means for poverty in Edinburgh, now and in the future. This testimony was published in the Commission's interim report in May 2020.
- 4.4 This final report now reflects on the evidence collected before Covid-19 and presents the final findings of the Commission setting out the immediate, medium and long term actions needed to end poverty in Edinburgh.

Main findings

- 4.5 The Commission finds that:
- 4.5.1 An estimated 77,600 people were in poverty in Edinburgh in the year prior to the coronavirus outbreak, representing 15% of all citizens but almost one in five of all children

- 4.5.2 People live in poverty in every area of the city. Almost two thirds of people on very low incomes live in areas out with those parts of Edinburgh commonly described as 'deprived' or 'disadvantaged'
- 4.5.3 Inequalities are entrenched in Edinburgh. A boy born in some affluent parts of the city can expect to live 21 years longer than one born in a poorer area. In schools, the city does better than the national average for pupils from affluent areas but worse for those from poorer areas.
- 4.5.4 Levels of child poverty in Edinburgh and Scotland have risen by more than 25% in the past five years, as have levels of in work poverty. 65% of all children in poverty live in a family where adults are in paid employment.
- 4.5.5 Over three quarters of people in poverty live in social or private rented accommodation and housing costs in Edinburgh are a key driver of high poverty rates in the city. Commission estimates suggest that 15,600 people in the city would not be living in poverty if Edinburgh's housing costs were closer to the Scottish average.
- 4.5.6 Poverty rates are anticipated to rise sharply during early 2021, while long term trends suggest a continued steady increase throughout the next decade. Without policy changes it is conservatively estimated that an additional 4,500 Edinburgh citizens could be living in poverty by spring 2021.
- 4.6 The Commission final report sets out an ambition to end poverty in Edinburgh by 2030, with clear targets to describe what meeting that ambition will require. The report asks the Council, and all Edinburgh Partnership members, to make a public commitment to adopt and work towards meeting the following four targets by 2030:
 - 4.6.1 No-one in Edinburgh needs to go without basic essentials they need to eat, keep clean, stay warm and dry
 - 4.6.2 Fewer than one in ten people are living in relative poverty in Edinburgh at any given time, and
 - 4.6.3 No-one in Edinburgh lives in persistent poverty
 - 4.6.4 No-one in Edinburgh experiences stigma due to their income.
- 4.7 To meet this ambition, the Commission final report provides a call to action to the whole city, and a framework of practical and deliverable actions.
- 4.8 At the centre of this framework the Commission makes a call for City of Edinburgh Council to take a lead role in implementing a radical new operating model for all public services in Edinburgh so that all public workers are focused and empowered to put prevention of poverty at the heart of everything they do. The approach outlined in the report would aim to embed the best available examples of person-centred service models into the core remit of all staff and empower them to work across professional boundaries to deliver whole household support embedded within local communities.

- 4.9 Alongside this core action the framework also sets out actions needed, by the Council, employers, public sector and third sector agencies across the city, to ensure that people in poverty in Edinburgh can expect:
- 4.9.1 Fair work that provides dignity and security,
 - 4.9.2 A decent home we can afford to live in,
 - 4.9.3 Income security that provides a real safety net,
 - 4.9.4 Opportunities that drive justice and boost prospects,
 - 4.9.5 Connections in a city that belongs to us, and
 - 4.9.6 Equality in our health and wellbeing
- 4.10 Across all these actions, the report outlines those which require immediate and urgent response to address issues arising as a result of the covid crisis and current recession, as well as those which require longer term work and planning.
- 4.11 The recommendations set out by this Commission have aimed to focus predominantly on decisions and issues it is largely in the power of the city to address. In many cases, however, the Commission recognises that key actions are required by UK and Scottish Government to address fundamental structural issues that the city cannot take forward alone. Towards this, the framework also include specific asks for Governments at all levels to action. It is important to note the Commission's clear finding that targets to end poverty in the city cannot be met without action across all areas of the framework the report sets out, and without commitments from all actors, local, Scottish Government, and UK Government.

End Poverty Edinburgh Citizen Group

- 4.12 This report marks the end of the work programme begun by the Edinburgh Poverty Commission in November 2018. Alongside the asks it makes to The Council and Edinburgh Partnership to respond to this report, the Commission has also worked to establish a new independently funded citizen led group, provisionally titled 'End Poverty Edinburgh', to carry on the conversations and relationships started over the past 18 months. This group will aim to
- 4.12.1 Continue to raise awareness and understanding of the experience and reality of poverty in Scotland's capital city
 - 4.12.2 Influence decisions that are made about the way the city works and the way city institutions plan and deliver services, and
 - 4.12.3 Hold the city to account for delivery of the vision to End Poverty in Edinburgh.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 It is proposed that the Policy and Sustainability Committee agrees to consider a formal response to the final report of the Edinburgh Poverty Commission in December 2020. This response will form of a comprehensive, cross-council

programme of work setting out clear commitments to action in the short, medium, and long term.

- 5.2 Development of this programme will be taken forward as part of the Poverty and Prevention workstream of the Council Adaptation and Renewal Programme. This programme will further be incorporated in the Local Child Poverty Action report the Council and NHS have a statutory duty to publish by end of 2020.
- 5.3 It is proposed that the Council's Adaptation and Renewal All Party Oversight Group provide additional scrutiny to support development of this programme, and that a further meeting of the group is held in October 2020 to assist with this process. In doing so, it is proposed that the remit of the Council's Poverty All Party Oversight Group (approved in February 2020, but not previously convened) should be merged within that of the Adaptation and Renewal All Party Oversight Group.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 Secretariat support for Edinburgh Poverty Commission has been led by City of Edinburgh Council which provides project management functions for the Commission, with colleagues across the Edinburgh Partnership providing additional support and contributions as the project requires.
- 6.2 All costs for the Commission are covered by a budget of £76,000. This is made up of £16,000 of funding provided by Edinburgh Partnership to cover running costs, and £60,000 provided by Scottish Government to cover the cost of research and citizen engagement activities. No additional financial costs are incurred by the Council associated with its support of the Commission.
- 6.3 In addition to that funding, the project has secured additional research support from Joseph Rowntree Foundation covering the period to September 2020.
- 6.4 Throughout its work the project has been critically dependent upon the time of its 12 commission members and their commitment and investment in the inquiry process. As at September 2020, this has equated to well over 600 hours of volunteer time from our independent commission members. This commitment has been more than equalled by the response and engagement of citizens and community groups who made the time to take part in interviews, focus groups, workshops, and to provide the written evidence on which the Commission has based its findings.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 Details of stakeholder and community engagement are detailed in the paper attached.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 [City of Edinburgh Council, June 2018](#)
- 8.2 [Corporate Policy and Sustainability Committee, October 2018](#)
- 8.3 [Finance and Resource Committee, October 2019.](#)
- 8.4 [Policy and Sustainability Committee, November 2019](#)
- 8.5 [Policy and Sustainability Committee, February 2020](#)
- 8.6 [Policy and Sustainability Committee, May 2020](#)
- 8.7 [Policy and Sustainability Committee, June 2020](#)

9. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Actions to End Poverty in Edinburgh

Appendix 1: Actions to End Poverty in Edinburgh

A Just Capital

Actions to End Poverty in Edinburgh

September 2020

Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Summary and key messages..... | 2 |
| Foreword | 9 |
| 1. Introduction | 12 |
| 2. Poverty in Edinburgh | 13 |
| 3. What needs to change? | 15 |
| 4. A call to action..... | 16 |
| 5. Actions to End Poverty in Edinburgh..... | 18 |
| 6. Achieving real change..... | 51 |
| 7. A big thank you..... | 54 |
| Appendix 1 – Meet the Commissioners | 56 |

Summary and key messages

The **Edinburgh Poverty Commission** is an independent group who have been working together since the end of 2018 to define the actions needed to end poverty in Edinburgh.

The work of the Commission has been supported by the Edinburgh Partnership, and The City of Edinburgh Council. Funding for our research activity was provided by the Scottish Government and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

This is our final report. Following what we believe to be the most extensive process of inquiry into poverty, its causes, consequences and solutions ever undertaken in a Scottish local authority, this report is a call to action to everyone in the city: the City of Edinburgh Council, the Edinburgh Partnership, the Scottish and UK Governments, the third sector, business, communities and citizens of Edinburgh.

Key messages

- Poverty in Edinburgh is real and damaging, but it can be solved. By implementing the calls to action we make in this report, we think the city can set a course to end poverty in Edinburgh by 2030.
- We have identified six areas for action – fair work, a decent home, income security, opportunities to progress, connections, health and wellbeing - and one cultural challenge that should serve as a lens through which each action should be approached.
- To end poverty in the city, the single biggest transformation Edinburgh could achieve would be to make the experience of seeking help less painful, less complex, more humane, and more compassionate. We call on City of Edinburgh Council to lead in the design and delivery of a new relationship based way of working for all public services in Edinburgh.
- There is no solution to poverty in Edinburgh without resolving the city's housing and homelessness crisis. We call on the Scottish Government, as an urgent priority, to ensure the city has the right funding and support to meet its social housing expansion needs.
- This report marks the end of the work of this Edinburgh Poverty Commission, but only the beginning of a movement that needs to take root to create an Edinburgh without poverty. As a legacy, we have helped to develop **End Poverty Edinburgh** - a new independent group of residents with first-hand experience of living on a low income and their allies who want to be part of shaping the solutions. As a group, they will work to raise awareness and understanding of poverty, influence decisions, and hold the city to account for ending poverty in Edinburgh.

Poverty in Edinburgh

In the wealthiest city in Scotland, we estimate that almost 78,000 people are living in [relative poverty](#), representing some 15% of the population and as many as 1 in 5 children.

The majority of people living in poverty in Edinburgh are of working age, in employment, living in rented accommodation, with the highest rates experienced by families with children. Lone parents, nine in ten of them women, disabled people, carers and Black and Minority Ethnic families are more likely to be in poverty than others in the city. Such families live in every area of the city, in every type of neighbourhood. Two-thirds of people in poverty in Edinburgh do not live in those areas commonly considered as 'deprived'. Very often these families will be affected by physical and mental health burdens related directly to the poverty they experience.

Throughout the course of our work we have heard, perhaps more than anything else, of the intolerable toll living in poverty takes on people's health and wellbeing. People in poverty told us they are exhausted physically and emotionally, having to make impossible decisions about living costs; of the struggle to find support, the stigma and shame felt being judged by others, and of feeling trapped in a system that does not care about them.

What needs to change

As we have listened to people's experiences, we have recognised that the change required to end poverty in Edinburgh is as much about changing the **day to day experiences**, connections and relationships between individuals and organisations as concrete change to **material circumstances**. Change will come by addressing one via the other.

In developing the actions set out in this report, we are guided by the following principles:

- We do not accept poverty is inevitable: it can be solved
- People who are struggling must be supported to move out of poverty quickly, take control of their lives, and contribute to a city where people look after each other
- Sustainable solutions can only be designed and delivered alongside people who experience poverty
- All the power in Edinburgh, from all our organisations and communities, is needed to directly effect change within the city, but also to build the public and political will for change needed at national level
- We do not aim merely to 'tackle', 'reduce', 'address', or 'mitigate the effects of' poverty. Our aim is to end poverty within a decade.

What do we mean when we say, 'End Poverty'?

Ending poverty does not mean Edinburgh becoming a city in which no one ever loses a job or ever experiences a period of their life on low income. But it does mean Edinburgh being a city where living on a low income is temporary, not a persistent trap, and does not mean having to go without food, or warmth, or safety. And it means Edinburgh becoming a city where the number of people experiencing low income at any given time falls to a level comparable with the highest performing societies in Europe.

By implementing the actions we describe in this report, we think that Edinburgh should, by 2030, aim to be a city in which:

- **No one feels stigmatised, abandoned, or treated with less respect by the city as a result of their income or their wealth**
- **No one has to go without the basic essentials they need to eat, keep clean and safe, and stay warm and dry**
- **Fewer than one in ten children *and* fewer than one in ten adults are living in relative poverty at any given time**
- **No-one lives in persistent poverty**

A call to action

We have identified seven areas of action needed to end poverty in Edinburgh, each highlighting a set of challenges and solutions emerging from our inquiry. In each action area we set out the city partners who need to act, and the fundamental changes they need to make.



This is not a menu of options the city can pick and choose from, they represent a single set of interconnected, actions that need to be delivered if Edinburgh is to end poverty. Across all these areas of action, the solutions we highlight are practical and deliverable, and in many cases build on the good practice we have found already being delivered in Edinburgh. The challenge to the city is to extend the reach and impact of solutions we already know work.

Most importantly, this is a call to action for the whole city and everyone who has a stake in its future. Many, though not all, of the levers needed to end poverty are held by the city – public sector, employers, third sectors, citizens all have critical roles to play in delivering these actions.

But the city cannot end poverty by itself – achieving the goals we have set out will need active and committed partnership with the Scottish and UK Governments. Scotland’s poverty challenge is Edinburgh’s poverty challenge: the Scottish Government cannot meet its own ambitious goals on child poverty, on housing, on homelessness, and on a fairer Scotland without action in Edinburgh, and without a funding settlement and regulatory support that meets the needs and challenges of our capital city.

The main body of this report provides detail on every action included in this report, along with the rationale and evidence underpinning their inclusion. In summary:

- **The right support in the places we live and work:** To end poverty in the city, the pre-condition and the single biggest transformation Edinburgh could achieve would be to make the experience of seeking help less painful and confusing more humane, and more compassionate. We call on City of Edinburgh Council to lead, working with other Edinburgh Partnership members, the design and delivery of a new operating model for all public services so that all public workers are focused and empowered to put prevention of poverty at the heart of everything they do. This model should ensure that people in all parts of the city have local, safe, welcoming community spaces within walking or pram-pushing distance where they can connect with others, access the right support for them and make progress at the right pace.
- **Fair work that provides enough to live on:** Edinburgh has a thriving local economy with high rates of employment and high average pay, but even here work is not always the secure pathway out of poverty that it needs to be. We call on Edinburgh's employers, Trades Unions, social enterprises, and public sector bodies to come together in a new alliance to make Edinburgh a Living Wage City in 2021, to deliver a new Edinburgh Guarantee for people of all ages, and to commit to delivering at least 1 FTE job with training for a person from an at-risk group for every £1m of public sector procurement spending over the next decade.
- **A decent home we can afford to live in:** There is no pathway to ending poverty in Edinburgh without resolving the city's housing and homelessness crisis. Almost one in three of the city's households in poverty are only there due to high housing costs, compared with one in eight households in poverty across Scotland. We call on the Scottish Government, as an urgent priority, to work with city partners to ensure that its next Housing Investment Plan is sufficient to build 2,000 social rented homes per annum in the city over the next decade. We call on City of Edinburgh Council to commit to making maximum use of new powers to regulate and license short term letting in the city, and to expand and improve early person-centred advice and advocacy services to prevent homelessness.
- **Income security that offers a real lifeline:** Too many people in poverty in Edinburgh are not aware of, or able to access all the support to which they are entitled. We call on Edinburgh Partnership to ensure proactive, high impact support to maximise household income is embedded in every nursery, school, and GP surgery in the city. Additional long-term investment to expand access to affordable credit is needed to support this action. We call on UK Government to commit to keeping temporary increases in Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, and Local Housing Allowance, beyond April 2021 and extending this uplift to other legacy benefits. We welcome the learning to date from research into ideas such as Citizen's Basic Income and a Minimum Income Guarantee, and

encourage further exploration of the ways such innovations might provide a pathway towards greater income security.

- **Opportunities that drive justice and boost prospects:** **Inequality in Edinburgh is most starkly apparent in the way that the availability and quality of opportunities to progress in life depend on your income and where you live in the city.** This is reflected in an attainment gap that is wider and reducing more slowly than in Scotland as a whole. We call on City of Edinburgh Council to to codesign with young people and families living in poverty a significant new programme to improve attainment and to develop genuinely mixed school catchment areas by 2030.. We call on Edinburgh’s Universities and Private Schools to do more to improve opportunities for people on low incomes, for example by sharing teaching and learning resources online. We call on the Edinburgh Partnership to invest in a radical expansion of mentoring schemes in Edinburgh to help children and young people develop trusted connections and build bridges to a wider range of high quality experiences and opportunities.
- **Connections in a city that belongs to us:** **Too many people we met during our inquiry told us they feel large parts of the city don’t belong to them or that many aspects of Edinburgh life feel ‘off limits’.** The Scottish Government and City of Edinburgh Council should ensure that any public funding for the post Covid renewal of the city’s festivals and tourism economy is conditional on delivery of actions to promote fair work, inclusion and equality. We call on City of Edinburgh Council to embed a 20-minute walking or ‘pram pushing’ distance principle at the heart of designing all neighbourhoods in Edinburgh with consequences for planning of housing, amenity, employment, and services.. We call on the Scottish Government to extend eligibility for concessionary travel to under 25s and to unpaid carers with Edinburgh serving as a demonstration site, and the Edinburgh Partnership to collaborate with partners to provide ‘single gateway’ easy access to free and concessionary travel. We also call on City of Edinburgh Council to work with partners to accelerate digital inclusion, putting affordability and skills at the heart of its plans .
- **Equality in our health and wellbeing:** **Through all our work, we have heard about how poverty takes an intolerable toll on people’s mental and physical health.** We call on City of Edinburgh Council, EVOG and local organisations to continue their collaboration to co-ordinate services to ensure citizens experiencing food insecurity have access to quality fresh food, and that this serves as a gateway to the wider support many will need. We call on The Edinburgh Partnership to support local organisations and primary care teams to provide community-based activities which promote wellbeing for living with long term health conditions, and to invest in early intervention, first aid and holistic approaches to improve mental health. We believe city residents have a role to play as volunteers, spotting and supporting friends, neighbours and colleagues with signs of mental distress. We call on NHS Lothian to review service transformation to ensure renewal has a sharp

focus on addressing health inequalities, establishing the trust needed to identify wider issues beyond immediate presentation and deal with medical complexity.

Passing the baton: End Poverty Edinburgh

This report marks the end of the work of this Edinburgh Poverty Commission, but only the beginning of a movement that needs to take root to create an Edinburgh without poverty. Our final action is to pass on the baton to those who will work to make the changes we have set out in this report, identify other priorities in future, and hold the city to account for delivering those changes.

The Commission has been working hard to develop a new network provisionally named **End Poverty Edinburgh**, who will carry on the work we have started. This is a group of Edinburgh citizens we have met during our inquiry, who have expressed their desire and commitment to be a part of the change their city needs to make. They are a mix of people with first-hand experience of living on a low income and civic allies. We believe this group, independently funded and working without oversight from any Edinburgh institution, represents the start of a new citizen-led movement to end poverty in Edinburgh, which will build in force as they are joined by allies from all parts of the city.

Commitment, starting now

This report describes a big ambition and a large number of practical actions that need to be taken in this city. As a Commission we are under no illusions about the scale of the challenge we have set out, even without the pandemic.

We fully recognise that the economic and public health risks facing us bring with them serious financial challenges for all sectors in the city. We are also clear that we are in a period of change which will to a great degree shape Edinburgh's new ways of working and that the first year following publication of this report must be one of real commitment and progress.

With these thoughts in mind, we expect **the first twelve months following publication of this report to be a period of implementation and planning** - delivering those actions which can be started immediately and planning of those actions which need further development. In particular, we expect:

- All city partners to make a public commitment to end poverty in Edinburgh by 2030, and to delivery of the four core targets set out in this report
- City of Edinburgh Council and Edinburgh Partnership to meet with the new **End Poverty Edinburgh** citizen group to agree ways of working together and define new opportunities for citizens to co-design and influence change in the city.
- City of Edinburgh Council and Edinburgh Partnership to publish detailed plans setting out how they intend to respond to all the calls for action in this report

- City of Edinburgh Council and Edinburgh Partnership to include annual reporting on progress towards delivery of these actions within the [Local Child Poverty Action Reports](#) they are already required to produce.
- The Scottish Government to commit to work with City of Edinburgh Council and other city partners to agree the additional investment, in particular to drive actions on housing and homelessness, needed in the city.
- All Edinburgh Partnership member organisations to commit, starting within the next budget cycle, to publish an annual statement on the impact they expect their budget decisions to have on the lives and experiences of people in poverty in Edinburgh and the poverty-reduction measures we have set.
- Edinburgh Partnership to use its convening powers to bring together city partners including business, private schools, independent funders and philanthropists in order to marshal all the resources of the city to grow a new **End Poverty Edinburgh Fund**. The purpose of this fund should be to resource ongoing innovation in support of the actions described in this report.

Foreword

Our Call to Action in Edinburgh comes after almost two years of conversations across the city: with people experiencing poverty, the community anchors that support them, keyworkers, , employers, councillors, public service officials ,housing providers and taxi drivers. This rich process has uncovered new insights on how poverty is experienced in Scotland’s capital city – some arising directly from the COVID-19 pandemic – but more stemming from long-established struggles. We set out much of what we had learned about the immediate impact of Covid in our interim report in May.

Since then, we have maintained a clear focus on addressing the root causes of poverty as well as mitigating the consequences. We have discovered common ground among people with different experiences and in different sectors: that poverty in Edinburgh is real, damaging and costly – but also that, despite the powerful currents that threaten to drive us further off course, there is enough determination in the city to embrace the twin challenges of solving poverty and reducing carbon emissions over the next decade.

We have identified six broad areas for action and one cultural challenge that should serve as a lens through which each action should be approached. Our first proposition is that Edinburgh will only succeed in creating a prosperous city without poverty if it creates the conditions for good jobs, genuinely affordable housing, income security and meaningful opportunities that drive justice and boost prospects – above all, in the city’s schools. In addition, a much sharper focus on connections across the city is needed – via digital participation, cheaper transport and creating neighbourhoods that work. These actions combined will flow through to reduced harm to people’s physical and mental health. Emergency food support should not become locked in as a fourth emergency service but serve as a gateway to other support that will ease isolation and build human connection and kindness where it has been lacking.

The common challenge running through all of our work is a cultural one. We call on the City Council and its partners in all sectors to shift towards a relationship-based way of working which gets alongside people and communities in a holistic way. The experience of poverty is too often one of stigma, being assessed, referred and passed from pillar to post – a separate service and multiple workers for each need. This radical move would see public servants authorised to put poverty prevention at the heart of their day-to-day work. It will mean new relationships with citizens, employees and third sector partners. It will take visible leadership and longer-term financial commitment. There are green shoots in Edinburgh and examples from



Jim McCormick (Chair)

Associate Director for Scotland,
Joseph Rowntree Foundation

beyond Scotland demonstrating how better outcomes for families can be achieved and fewer resources locked into multiple complex systems. We call this ‘the right support in the places we live and work’ to signal the importance of local access to multiple forms of support under one roof and within walking or pram-pushing distance – for example money advice and family support offered in nurseries, schools, GP surgeries and libraries.

None of these challenges are new. The City Council and its partners can point to significant investment in recent years to turn the tide on poverty. But we are not persuaded that actions have been consistent, at scale, sustained over time or have poverty reduction as part of their purpose.

While Edinburgh has many of the powers to go further, we are not persuaded that it can deliver on the required social housing expansion without a new funding deal with the Scottish Government. This is urgently needed to boost investment and to help unlock the supply of land at a reasonable price. Almost one in three families in Edinburgh in poverty are pulled below the water line solely due to their housing costs. That compares with one in eight households in poverty across Scotland. Solving the city’s housing crisis will go a long way to delivering on affordable housing ambitions for the country as a whole. At the same time, the UK Government has a critical role in creating an income lifeline for families in and out of work, by maintaining the currently temporary increase in Universal Credit and Local Housing Allowance – both of which have become more significant as a result of damage to Edinburgh’s job market since March.

This Call to Action is not a list of recommendations or a menu of options. Reflecting our lives, each area is connected to the others. A plan for housing makes little sense in isolation from a plan for schools.

Developing skills for employment will fall short if basic needs for secure, decent housing and food are neglected. Nor is the ten-year horizon a get-out clause. We have worked on this basis because Scotland has committed to a significant cut in child poverty by 2030 and because many of the city’s existing plans run to the same schedule. We call on the City Council and the wider Edinburgh Partnership to set out its initial response by Christmas, as part of a first year of planning and early implementation.

And we are leaving a legacy through a new independent network, End Poverty Edinburgh. Led by Commission member Zoe Ferguson and our partners at Poverty Alliance, this brings together a core group of residents with first-hand experience of living on a low income and allies who want to be part of shaping the solutions. Inspired by a similar approach in Edmonton (Alberta), they will stress test this report, challenge and add their own ideas, work with city partners to achieve progress but also hold the city to account on its response.

I want to thank everyone who contributed to our work in the hard graft of sharing painful stories, completing surveys and through organised and chance conversations. Each member of the Commission gave their time, energy and ideas generously and for longer than originally asked. The quotes in this report reflect only a little of their brilliant contributions. Our work – and this report - was only possible due to the

skill, care and patience brought by our secretariat team of Chris Adams, Nicola Elliott, Ciaran McDonald, and Gareth Dixon.

We have listened, been shocked and inspired – I hope we have done justice to what we have learned. Our Call to Action sets out something beyond hope: it is an expectation of what the city can and must now achieve.

“On behalf of all my fellow commissioners I want to offer our huge thanks and gratitude to the over 1,000 citizens and workers who contributed their voices, experiences and insights to our inquiry over the past 18 months. Edinburgh is a fantastic, thriving city, but we are still home to over 77,000 people who struggle in poverty every day. We cannot accept this any longer.

Tackling poverty in Edinburgh is a challenge that must be acted on urgently, with great responsibility and through a Team Edinburgh approach. We will need to work together partnership and marshall all the resources of the city if we are to truly make a difference.

I’m very appreciative of the hard work and dedication that has gone into the creation of this report and further to that, incredibly grateful to have been part of the process over the last few months, to have the opportunity to meet and hear from those who are living in poverty in our city. As the Council’s Poverty Champion, I will do everything I can to enable our city to make the changes that the Commission have identified.”



Cammy Day (Vice Chair)

Depute Leader, City of Edinburgh Council

1. Introduction

The Edinburgh Poverty Commission is an independent group working together to define the actions needed to end poverty in Edinburgh.

This is our final report. It is a call to action to everyone in the city: The City of Edinburgh Council, the Edinburgh Partnership, the Scottish and UK Governments, the third sector, business, communities, and citizens of Edinburgh. We know that poverty and inequality act as a drag on prosperity and impact negatively on wellbeing for all. Ending poverty in Edinburgh benefits all of us.

The conclusions the Commission has arrived at in this report have been informed fundamentally by the voices of citizens who live in poverty. More than anything else our work has been to listen. And now that this phase of the Commission's work is complete, it is these voices, together with their allies from all parts of the city, that must continue to drive change and justice.

"Hopefully having it down on paper in this Edinburgh Poverty Commission document will mean decision-makers actually take it seriously. It is exhausting for people in poverty to have to re-explain their experiences and traumas, particularly when results don't always seem forthcoming."

Edinburgh Poverty Commission contributor

Our aim in this report is not just to describe the problem of poverty in Edinburgh but to draw on the glimmers of hope we have seen in what can be done by organisations and individuals. We want this report to shine a light on the actions, behaviours and attitudes which make a real difference to people's lives.

This report is being published at the end of a phase dominated by a global pandemic and the beginning of an economic storm. While the risks and impacts of poverty have been heightened by the Covid crisis we have also seen evidence of increased understanding, empathy and solidarity. It is this sense of shared humanity, underpinning a shared responsibility to rebuild a city which values justice over privilege, that fires our firm hopes for real change.

The journey

Edinburgh Poverty Commission was launched in November 2018 and met 9 times in full session over 18 months. During that period, we held more than 100 evidence sessions and project visits, met and heard from over 70 local organisations, commissioned significant new research into the experience of citizens living on low incomes and attitudes to poverty across the city and in total heard from more than 1,000 individual participants. This process, we believe, represents the single largest conversation about poverty ever undertaken by any local area in Scotland. A separate report captures the breadth of evidence we have considered.

In the midst of drafting our findings in March this year, the lockdown to limit the spread of Covid-19 was imposed. We decided to delay publishing our final report until now and use the time to hear what was

happening across the city over the spring and summer: to listen to concerns, fears and hopes and reflect on what this means for poverty in Edinburgh, now and in the future. This testimony was set out in our [interim report](#) in May 2020.

This, our final report, combines the evidence we collected before Covid alongside the new experiences and reflections gathered during this crisis so far. It sets out a framework for change, and the immediate, medium term, and long-term actions needed to end poverty in Edinburgh by the end of the decade.

2. Poverty in Edinburgh

Edinburgh has a distinctive profile of poverty that is different from other cities in Scotland.

In the wealthiest city in Scotland, we estimate that almost 78,000 people are living in poverty, representing some 15% of the population and as many as 1 in 5 of all children. As the Covid recession begins to bite, our estimates suggest that number could rise by at least 4,500 people by spring 2021 unless significant action is taken now¹.

Inequalities are entrenched in Edinburgh. A boy born in some affluent parts of the city can expect to live 21 years longer than one born in a poorer area. In schools, the city does better than the national average for pupils from affluent areas but worse for those from poorer areas.

The majority of people living in poverty in Edinburgh are of working age, in employment, living in rental accommodation, with the highest rates experienced by families with children. Such families live in every area of the city, in every type of neighbourhood and community. The majority of people in poverty in Edinburgh do not live in those areas commonly considered as 'deprived'. Very often these families will be affected by illness, disabilities and mental health problems brought about either as a cause or a consequence of the poverty they experience.

"Well, I know private rent is terrible, in Edinburgh you can pay up to about £1000 a month. For private rent in Edinburgh. I would say we're just as bad as London...And it's never been acknowledged. I mean, I work in retail part-time and you're only on minimum wage, and they don't care. They don't care if you can't afford to pay your rent or not."

Edinburgh Poverty Commission contributor

Pre-Covid, even with record low unemployment and high average wages, we heard the frustration felt by people working hard to hold down a job that barely pays enough to get by. People told us about the impossibility of managing and planning a household budget when insecure work, including zero hours contracts, means working hours and pay are volatile. We heard particularly from women and young people, who often feel exploited in the city's job market.

¹ Sources for all data referenced in this section are available in the evidence paper that accompanies this report

Edinburgh is the least affordable city in Scotland to buy or to rent a house. Average house prices are more than six times average earnings. The cost of buying is too high for many and the lack of social housing and growth of the short term let market means many are trapped in unaffordable private rental accommodation. We heard of the fear that rising housing costs are making ever larger parts of the city 'unliveable' and the isolation felt by the large number of people living in temporary accommodation, disconnected from family and friends.

Throughout the course of our work we have heard, perhaps more than anything else, of the intolerable toll living in poverty takes on people's mental health. People have told us they are exhausted physically and emotionally, having to make impossible decisions about living costs. They have told us they struggle to find support, often feel shamed and judged by others, and feel trapped in a system that does not care about them.

Covid has shone a light on pre-existing inequalities. Edinburgh experienced one of the largest drops in job vacancies in the UK between March and June, while the number of people claiming unemployment related benefits in July 2020 was more than three times the level recorded a year ago. Already, those in low paid jobs have been impacted most by a cut in working hours and redundancy and longer term an increase in the number of people pulled into poverty is likely. In our interim report we reflected the significant trauma felt by many of those having to claim out of work benefits for the first time.

Premature mortality rates for people from the most economically deprived parts of Edinburgh have always been significantly higher than average, and there are significant fears for widening health inequalities flowing from both the health and economic impacts of Covid.

The experience of those struggling previously has been made significantly harder during the current crisis with particular impacts for young people, disabled people, black and ethnic minority groups, and women. Our interim report spoke of the overriding sense of fear in which many people are living.

Throughout the Covid crisis, many of those who continued to work in essential roles, often at significant risk, did so in material hardship. The widespread respect and gratitude shown to those key workers' demands that post Covid we cannot return to accepting that people in work who keep essential services running should often be doing so in poverty. The biggest challenge we face now is to prevent these inequalities persisting and deepening.

"Struggling is the worst thing to do. If you have any mental health problems, and you're short of money, then everything gets worse and worse. You don't know what bills you've paid and what ones you're waiting to pay. You get yourself all confused, then, have you anything in to eat, or were you not able to eat this day because you were paying a certain bill. How many times could you be chased by people who are needing money and you just don't have the money." **Edinburgh Poverty Commission contributor**

3. What needs to change?

As we have listened to people's experiences, we have recognised that the change required to end poverty in Edinburgh is as much about changing the day to day experiences, connections and relationships between individuals and organisations and within communities as concrete change to material circumstances.

We are clear that as well as fair work, a decent home, income security, better health and improved prospects, people need experiences, connections and relationships based on understanding, kindness, dignity and respect. Rather than being shunted from pillar to post through complicated systems of assessment and referral people need help with all the issues that matter to them and that enables them to take control of their own lives.

It seems all the clearer now, following the experience of the last few months, that lasting solutions to end poverty will have to be built together, in connections and relationships defined by our shared humanity. We need to ensure that the growing understanding of shared hardship we have witnessed during the Covid crisis - those instincts to reach out and offer help - are harnessed rather than merely observed then allowed to recede.

In developing the actions set out in this report, we are guided by the following principles:

- **We do not accept poverty is inevitable: it can be solved**
- **People who are struggling must be supported to move out of poverty quickly, take control of their lives, and contribute to a city where people look after each other**
- **Workable solutions can only be designed and delivered alongside people who experience poverty**
- **All the power in Edinburgh, from all our organisations and communities, is needed to directly effect change within the city, but also to build the public and political will for change needed at national level**
- **We do not aim merely to 'tackle', 'reduce', 'address', or 'mitigate the effects of' poverty. Our aim is to end poverty within a decade.**

"It feels like the system is especially designed to prevent people from helping themselves and taking an active role in shaping their lives."

Edinburgh Poverty Commission contributor

"Having to choose between heating a home or eating...being left with very little money after the bills are paid...being made to feel inadequate and unable to provide the basics."

Edinburgh Poverty Commission contributor

4. A call to action

This report is a call to action to all in the city. Our work tells us that the path to ending poverty in Edinburgh starts with a determination to open our eyes collectively to injustice in this city and a commitment to change. This means a change in the relationships employers have with their workers, a change in the relationship between the Scottish Government and Scotland's capital city, a change in the relationship between public agencies and the citizens they serve, a change in the relationship between public bodies and the third sector organisations they rely on, and a change in the relationships we all have within our communities, and across the city.

We are focused on the actions Edinburgh needs to take to end poverty. But we are acutely aware of the actions which also need to be taken by the Scottish and UK Governments. Our report highlights the fundamental steps needed at these levels to underpin local actions.

This report asks us all to listen to the voices of those who most need support and ensure those voices impact fairly on decisions. For too long, our institutions and many citizens have accepted a city which rewards privilege and the fatalism that says poverty cannot be solved. We need to change the way democracy works to value the voices of those with experience of poverty and ensure our institutions match

"Kindness might sound a bit 'meh' but that is what I think changes people."

Edinburgh Poverty Commission contributor

the empathy we have seen between citizens in recent months, to create a just transition towards a city that ends poverty.

The next sections of this report describe the framework of actions we expect the city to commit to over the next ten years. In delivery of these actions, we think that Edinburgh can realistically aim to end poverty in this city, and we set out the definitions and metrics by which success in meeting that aim can be measured.

There are actions in this report for every employer, every organisation, every sector, and every citizen in Edinburgh to take ownership of and help to deliver. Across all these actions we specifically call on:

The City of Edinburgh Council to take a lead role in implementing a radical new operating model for all public services in Edinburgh so that all public workers are focused and empowered to put prevention of poverty at the heart of everything they do.

Edinburgh Partnership member organisations to ensure the voices of those living in poverty are heard and effectively influence the way local decisions are made and budgets set.

Employers to value and support their staff like never before, building relationships of trust, and offering rewarding work that provides security and dignity.

The Scottish Government to commit to resetting the geographic balance of funding across Scotland, taking full account of the unique pressures faced in the capital city and recognising that Edinburgh's challenges are Scotland's challenges.

The UK Government to play its role in maintaining and extending the lifelines of support it established during the early months of this Covid crisis.

All organisations, public, private and third sector, to work together to create partnerships which support local economies and communities and enable people to take control of their lives. This means genuine partnerships based on mutual respect, trusted relationships and resource sharing, not limited to charitable giving.

All funders to ensure that **any public spending in Edinburgh is conditional** on supporting Fair Work and investing in organisations which benefit local economies and communities.

Print and broadcast media to listen harder, to reflect truth and reality, to call out the causes of poverty and inequality rather than highlight symptoms and apportion blame. People living in poverty deserve understanding and respect.

The citizens who did not wait to ask for permission to help others during the pandemic, to hold onto the connections they have made, to continue to notice, and reach out to each other, to engage within their own communities and between communities across the city, to participate actively in democracy, listen to the voices of those living in poverty, and make choices which benefit the public good, building more equal communities with fairer opportunities for all.

“Employers of all sectors have a key role to play. If we come out of this current crisis having learned one lesson it's surely that all people deserve a decent, secure income and to be treated fairly at work. This applies across all sectors and in all roles. As a society, we just pay the price elsewhere if we don't do this for each other.”

Sandy MacDonald, Edinburgh Poverty Commission member

5. Actions to End Poverty in Edinburgh

This section sets out the specific actions needed to end poverty in Edinburgh. We have identified seven areas of action, each highlighting a set of challenges and solutions emerging from our inquiry. In each action area we set out the city partners who need to act, and the fundamental changes they need to make.

Overall, we find that ending poverty in Edinburgh means delivering actions to make sure that everyone in this city can expect:

- The right support in the places we live and work
- Fair work that provides dignity and security
- A decent home we can afford to live in
- Income security that offers a real lifeline
- Opportunities that drive justice and boost prospects
- Connections in a city that belongs to us, and
- Equality in our health and wellbeing.



These are the seven areas of action we think the city needs to deliver against in order to end poverty in Edinburgh. Our analysis tells us that by taking these actions, collectively and with sustained commitment, we can end poverty in Edinburgh within the next decade.

What do we mean when we say, 'End Poverty'?

Poverty is often described as a complex problem with simple solutions. It is also often thought of as a perennial problem that is impossible to eradicate – after all, if we take a definition of poverty based on relative income levels, there will surely always be a proportion of the population who fall below any threshold we choose to draw?

Building on the work we have carried out in this city, listening to the experiences of people who live in poverty and what needs to change, we have set a definition of ending poverty that rests on specific goals and expectations against which success can be measured.

Ending poverty does not mean Edinburgh becoming a city in which no one ever loses a job or experiences a period of their life on low income. But it does mean Edinburgh being a city where periods of low income are temporary, not permanent traps, where a period of low income does not mean having to go without food, or warmth, or safety. And it does mean Edinburgh becoming a city where the number of people experiencing low income at any given time falls to a level comparable with the highest performing societies in Europe.

By 2030, ending poverty in Edinburgh means having a city in which

- **No one feels stigmatised, abandoned, or treated with less respect by the city as a result of their income or their wealth**
- **No one has to go without the basic essentials they need to eat, keep clean and stay warm and dry**
- **Fewer than one in ten children *and* fewer than one in ten adults are living in relative poverty at any given time**
- **No-one lives in persistent poverty²**

The evidence paper prepared to accompany this report provides more details, but our estimates³ suggest that meeting these targets will involve, by 2030, Edinburgh committing to:

- **Removing 7,000-9,000 people out of destitution, or 580-750 people per annum**
- **Removing 20,900 people from relative poverty, or 2,100 per annum, and**
- **Removing 9,970 from persistent poverty, or some 1,000 people per annum**

² Scottish Government analysis suggests that an individual is in persistent poverty if they have been in poverty for three or more of the last four years.

³ The evidence paper prepared to accompany this report provides detailed sources and methodologies used to estimate each of these targets

5.1 The right support in the places we live and work

| | |
|--|---|
| <p><i>“We are all about making relationships with people. We have banned the word ‘referral’. We work with partners, but there are never handovers. Our whole ethos is to remove disconnects and help people through whatever support they need. Working this way gets better outcomes for people than working to narrow, predefined paths. We find that we get better results from the funding sources that don’t pay us by results than from the funds that do”</i></p> <p>Edinburgh Poverty Commission contributor</p> | <p><i>“To tackle the scale of inequality we see in Edinburgh will take radical and bold interventions. We know that we must use this moment to act and that given the scale of the task, success will require cross-sector collective effort of a kind that has never been seen before. There are no quick fixes, so we need to invest in leaders and organisations with strong track records, as well as vision, passion, and creativity.”</i></p> <p>Celia Tennant Edinburgh Poverty Commission member</p> |
|--|---|

The challenge Edinburgh faces

Living in poverty grinds people down and too often the attitudes and experiences they encounter trying to get help or just function day to day make their situation even worse.

People have told us that they feel shame and stigma and that they will be judged if they seek help. They feel they are frequently not listened to, or treated with dignity, respect and kindness. They are shunted from pillar to post, telling their story numerous times to deal with all the issues they need help with. Help with one specific problem can fail because it is just one of multiple issues which are not addressed together and at worst help in one area precludes help in another. Many have additional difficulties in accessing support due to disabilities or health conditions and / or language and cultural barriers exacerbated by difficulty in accessing translation services. Often the support available ignores the ways people may need help to address the emotional toll of their situation.

To end poverty in the city, the pre-condition and the single biggest transformation Edinburgh could achieve would be to make the experience of seeking help less painful, more humane, and more compassionate. In fact, we believe that without this shift in culture and ways of working, none of the other actions will have the impact they need to.

We have concluded that Edinburgh needs to:

- Ensure people in all parts of the city have local, safe, welcoming community spaces where they can connect with others, access the right support for them and make progress at the right pace.

- Ensure those places of support are available in all parts of the city, where people can access them as easily as possible. For some this will mean local spaces in the community, for others this will mean the workplace or other accessible places in the city.
- Give staff at the frontline permission to make meaningful connections and develop relationships with people, removing over-reliance on procedural, risk-averse and rule bound approaches.
- Support development of positive values and culture through recruitment and workforce development.
- Empower staff from a range of services with different skills to work together to support people with all the issues that are relevant to them, removing the need to negotiate numerous and complex referral systems.
- Ensure support enables people to take control of their lives. Addressing immediate needs is only the first step to moving on. Holistic support must also be about helping people and communities to develop their strengths and skills and work towards goals for a better life.

The immediate impact of Covid made the support people could access the most relevant focus for our interim report. We heard of the significant trauma for many of losing work during the crisis and the difficulty of finding advice and support with social security and other entitlements. People told us they needed one point of contact who could help them navigate complex systems, support them through bureaucracy and address the emotional impact. While many of the community spaces people relied on were closed and face to face connections not possible, many organisations told us just how much people needed a trusted relationship to access support.

Throughout our inquiry we have seen many local organisations playing exactly this role, providing a single point of contact to build trusted relationships and help people find the support they need. We have seen excellent examples of money, welfare, and debt advice embedded in schools; we have seen third sector and statutory bodies working together to provide wraparound support for families on parenting, budgeting, and employability; we have seen community institutions across the city use food support as a focus to bring people together, to build relationships and to create safe spaces for people to find the help with wider issues. And we have seen the impact those ways of working provide, both in terms of profound, life changing experiences for the individuals and families supported, but also in terms of the return on investment delivered.

During the lockdown period, these city networks - including Maximise!, CHAI, LIFT, Working Rite, the Grassmarket Centre, The Ripple, Broomhouse Space and Hub among many others - made great strides to shift their ways of working to make sure those relationships can still be there for people when they need them.

In recent months the experience of how organisations have come together to support communities through Covid has accelerated the process we would have proposed in March. We must not go back. We must hold on to the gains which have been made and go further, building capacity and trust within organisations, between organisations and with communities. Almost ten years on from the Christie Commission there is both an absolute imperative and perhaps a greater opportunity than we have previously felt possible to shift power to communities, integrate organisations and embed prevention.

“if we really want to deliver services that are person centred, holistic and meaningful, we are going to need to be ready for investing the right level of resources in them. I think that it is not just about “throwing” money into services, but to make sure that the services we are contracting are “up for the job”. If we are using public money to contract services, those services should be accountable, and the Local Authority should have in place systems to monitor how public money is used.”

Carmen Simon, EndPovertyEdinburgh member

The action needed

City of Edinburgh Council should lead, working with other Edinburgh Partnership members, in design and delivery of **a new operating model for all public services in Edinburgh so that all public workers are focused and empowered to put prevention of poverty at the heart of everything they do**. The city should bring together what has been forged in emergency with the learning we already have from promising work focused on integrating support in communities. These approaches are in evidence already in Edinburgh, from the perspective of the physical assets in My Gracemount, shifting Health and Social Care to personalised asset-based approaches through 3 Conversations, and in Community Renewal’s development of holistic community support in Bingham/Magdalene.

In implementing new models of support, the city should aim for **small teams, drawing staff from statutory, third and business sectors** operating at a neighbourhood level using simple existing methods to connect, assess need and build on assets. We should build on shifts in how and where services operate, have confidence to try new approaches that successfully remove the barriers people face, evaluate and alter plans to change direction if we need to and spread successful practice across the city.

There is no one sector or organisation which can manage all the support individuals and communities require on their own. Statutory and third sector support organisations in the city need to **work better together in a way that is planned, comprehensive and responds to the strengths and voices of communities**. Support structures should be responsive to the issues that matter to different people and be delivered as far as possible through **one point of contact, a trusted relationship**.

National and local government, agencies and organisations should give **clear permission to staff to make meaningful connections** and empower them to respond to need flexibly, balancing the risk of carrying on

as before against the usual approaches to eligibility criteria, risk assessment, accepted activity and performance management.

Alongside holding on to a more local approach to service delivery which has blurred the boundaries between sectors as we emerge from lockdown, Edinburgh Partnership needs to accelerate **the shifts in culture which have begun to happen** and are essential for the city's capacity to achieve **person centred, holistic support based on trusted relationships**. Where permission has been clearly given, we can expect to see increasing examples of the positive change that happens where staff operating at the frontline have confidence to connect, to respond to need flexibly and make judgements borne of humanity rather than only procedure. We should collect those examples and begin to systematically assess what they mean for our pre crisis ways of working. **Where a return to business as usual would stifle the value which has been created we must not return to where we were and instead begin to change the rules of** procurement, eligibility criteria, measurement, and performance management.

City of Edinburgh Council must **support community anchor organisations** to enable human connections and build on the groundswell of citizens who have been moved to give at a scale we have not previously seen to continue to contribute to their community.

City of Edinburgh Council, and Edinburgh Partnership members should **develop new models for contracting with the third and private sectors to** support organisations and alliances which support local economies, building community wealth and trusted relationships with citizens.

WHAT WORKS: Community Renewal - Lifting Neighbourhoods Together

During our inquiry we have encountered a number of promising approaches which exemplify on a small scale many of the features we are challenging the city to implement across all publicly funded services in Edinburgh.

Lifting Neighbourhoods Together is one of these projects. This is the name for Community Renewal Trust's five-year programme to improve support to lift neighbourhoods out of poverty. Funded by the National Lottery Community Fund it will launch simultaneously in Bingham & Magdalene in Edinburgh and in Walker (Newcastle-Upon-Tyne) in October 2020. It is a partnership approach which is the culmination of two decades work to apply evidence, experience and resources to break out of silos.

The programme will bring together an existing group of frontline specialists who already work in the locality delivering community/local services for public sector and third sector organisations. They will become a team without silos who are able to stick with people whatever their need for as long as is helpful.

When established, this local team will systematically engage with every household in Bingham and Magdelene, conducting a listening conversation to identify factors that help and hinder quality of life and wellbeing in the community. From these conversations, the programme will work with households to develop a personal or family holistic plan to identify and access the multiple forms of support they need, and work with them for as long as it takes to achieve their life goals and lift their household out of poverty.

5.2 Fair work that provides dignity and security

| | |
|--|---|
| <p><i>“The impact of poverty on wellbeing is constant uncertainty, lack of security and having to focus on day to day survival without having the luxury to make long term plans about the future”</i></p> | <p><i>“The Covid crisis has exposed a need to rethink employment practices and progress a Fair Work agenda. Behind this collapse in livelihoods lie some truly heart-breaking stories of families thrown into severe financial difficulty. We need all the city’s employers, public sector organisations, and trades unions to work together and make a collective commitment to delivering fair, rewarding, secure jobs for everyone.”</i></p> |
| <p>Edinburgh Poverty Commission contributor</p> | <p>Mary Alexander Edinburgh Poverty Commission Member</p> |

The challenge Edinburgh faces

Edinburgh has the most successful local economy in Scotland, but even here work is not necessarily the effective pathway out of poverty that it needs to be.

Pre Covid the majority (59%) of people in poverty in Edinburgh were in working households. Although coverage of the real Living Wage was second highest in Scotland, this still left 41,000 residents working in jobs paying less than the real Living Wage. Around one in ten (9%) of all jobs were casual, temporary or non-contract. Even for the lowest-income fifth of families in the city, earnings from employment account for more than 45% of all household income, broadly similar to the share provided by social security payments.⁴

In our citizen survey, conducted on behalf of the Commission by the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit during winter 2019/20, ‘work does not pay enough’ was the single factor most commonly raised as a cause of poverty in Edinburgh – cited by 83% of all respondents. But pay alone was not the only factor – most of our conversations about work in Edinburgh focused on experiences of insecurity and unpredictability of hours and of earnings. We heard story after story of people who could not be sure how much they would be paid next week, or how many hours they would be expected to work. We heard

“The wages of average jobs do not keep up with the cost of living...This means working becomes only a means to survival and not prospering.”

Edinburgh Poverty Commission contributor

examples of people not knowing how Universal Credit would be adjusted to take account of earnings until a couple of days before payment. We heard about working people making impossible decisions about how to manage their living costs, for example choosing between eating and heating and using foodbanks to

⁴ Scottish Government, Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland 2016-19, available via <https://www.gov.scot/publications/poverty-income-inequality-scotland-2016-19/>

survive. Many people felt there would be no point approaching their employer about working conditions and flexibility to enable them to work and fulfil caring commitments.

Post Covid, Edinburgh has suffered one of the biggest drops in job vacancies of any local authority area in the UK. The stabilisation efforts introduced by the UK Government have provided a significant lifeline for many people during this crisis. At their peak during Summer of 2020, 100,000 jobs in Edinburgh were being supported by the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the Self Employment Income Support scheme. Even with that support, the number of people claiming Universal Credit in Edinburgh has trebled in comparison to the same period last year and grown more quickly than any other part of Scotland. Alongside this, the crisis and the coming recession are amplifying for many people those feelings of insecurity. Part of this insecurity comes from the planned ending of the UK Government's furlough scheme, but even for those with work, there remains uncertainty over how to transition safely back into the workplace. We have heard from workers worried about whether they will be paid if they have to self-isolate, and about balancing work with childcare responsibilities if their children are asked to stay home from school.

All these pressures impact most strongly on those in low paid jobs, on women, BAME workers, young people, disabled people and carers. The structure of Edinburgh's economy means that those sectors likely to be slowest to re-open and hardest hit during this recession – hospitality, tourism, non-food retail - are those where low income workers are most likely to be employed. As unemployment is projected to rise to levels not seen for decades, if at all, in this city, there is an urgent need to ensure that the impacts of recession are not perpetuated by a new wave of long-term unemployment among those groups with the least opportunity to bounce back.

To end poverty, Edinburgh needs a strong response to these challenges of low pay, security of hours and earnings and opportunities to progress at work. Coming out of recession we know that Edinburgh is still likely to be the city in Scotland best placed to recover and create new jobs. The challenge for the city is to make sure that the economic recovery means that every worker in Edinburgh can expect their employment to be fair, and to provide dignity and security.

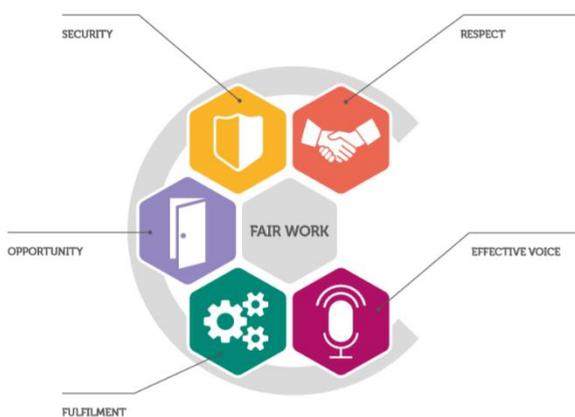
The pathways to this recovery are becoming more clearly defined – examples such as the Scottish Youth Guarantee and the UK Kickstart scheme represent a positive step towards preventing this recession having a scarring impact on the lives and careers of young people entering the jobs market. And we have seen good examples of programmes already in the city to help address in-work poverty and help people progress in their careers. Projects like [Next Step](#), for instance, provide person-centred one-to-one support to help people who are in work but in poverty to progress towards better paid, more secure jobs.

In the short term, though, there is still a need for action from UK and Scottish Governments to ensure that the closure of furlough schemes do not result in an abandonment of workers of all ages and their families

to immediate redundancies and unemployment. We do not underestimate the scale and urgency of the task at hand for employers of all sizes and sectors: securing a just, low carbon recovery which solves the problem of in-work poverty will take time. In the years ahead, though, many of the levers for change in this area are very much in the hands of the city itself.

At the moment there are an estimated 386 accredited living wage employers in Edinburgh. The [Living Wage Places toolkit](#) provides an excellent and promising template of how to build a local movement to make fair pay a basic norm for all employers in the city.

Beyond pay, initiatives like the [Living Hours](#) campaign and the [Fair Work Convention](#) provide the city with a clear and compelling guide to what it will take to make sure that jobs in Edinburgh offer all workers an effective voice in the workplace, opportunity, security, fulfilment and respect. Similarly, Strathclyde Business School's framework for [employer action on tackling in-work poverty](#) sets out a clear way forward for employers, enterprise agencies and unions to work together to create workplaces and supply chains that help people avoid and escape poverty.



“Fair work is work that offers effective voice, opportunity, security, fulfilment and respect; that balances the rights and responsibilities of employers and workers and that can generate benefits for individuals, organisations and society.”



The final strand in our pathway to fair work rests on the role of procurement and commissioning. There is solid evidence from other cities pursuing a pathway to inclusive growth to show how maximising the impact of public spending can make a real difference to the lives of people in poverty. For example, research evidence finds that *“significant impacts on poverty and social mobility would be achieved if the entire UK public sector pledged to generate a year’s work for a person from a target disadvantaged community for each £1m in contract value⁵”*. Our challenge to Edinburgh is to meet this standard, and to make sure that the potential to help people out of poverty through fair work is maximised from every procurement and commissioning exercise the city undertakes in the next decade.

⁵ MacFarlane, R with Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP (2014), Tackling poverty through public procurement, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, available at <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/tackling-poverty-through-public-procurement>

The action needed

Edinburgh's employers, Trades Unions, social enterprises, and public sector bodies need to come together in a new collective to **make Edinburgh a Living Wage City in 2021**. This should include a shared commitment to the actions needed to at least double the number of living wage accredited employers in Edinburgh over the next three years.

This alliance should further commit to promoting and acting as **ambassadors for fair work in the city**, exemplifying all the principles set out by the **Fair Work Convention**. In doing so, employers, public sector bodies and Trades Unions should adopt and act on the **Framework for Employer Action on In-work Poverty** developed by Strathclyde Business School.

We welcome the Scottish Government's announcement of a new Youth Guarantee, but we are clear in our view that Edinburgh needs to address challenges not only for young people, and not only in terms of access to work. Edinburgh took the lead in Scotland during the last recession in launching the **Edinburgh Guarantee**, and we challenge it to do so again in extending that guarantee to ensuring that **anyone out of work in the city can access the support they need to progress**. In doing so, employability programmes should make sure that support does not end with access to a job, but stays with people for as long as it takes to achieve the progress in skills and earnings to ensure they are free of in-work poverty.

Edinburgh Partnership members need to ensure their procurement spending does more to create fair work in the city. This means collective commitment to embedding '**Fair Work First**' principles in all public sector commissioning in Edinburgh. In doing so, partners should follow [Scottish Government good practice](#) to ensure that receipt of public contracts is conditional on employers' commitment to **invest in skills and training, no inappropriate use of zero hours contracts, action to close the gender pay gap, genuine workforce engagement including with trade unions, and payment of the real Living Wage**.

In line with standards recommended by international research evidence, all Edinburgh Partnership members should make a collective commitment to ensuring that public spending in Edinburgh delivers at least **1 FTE job with training for a person from a targeted group for every £1m of procurement spending** over the next decade. In doing so, partners should commit enough resources to the monitoring and effective delivery of community benefits clauses agreed with employers.

Scottish Government and city partners need to **invest more in reward and support** (through procurement, commissioning, training and promotion) for businesses and business models that are **closely rooted in the communities they serve**. This includes social enterprises, local co-operatives, and local entrepreneurs, many of which face barriers in accessing public procurement despite being strong on delivery of social and community benefits. In doing so Edinburgh should look to and learn from the best examples of local authorities adopting **Community Wealth Building** approaches at the heart of their economic recovery plans.

Scottish Government and city partners need to make sure that recovery plans recognise and effectively support the **Social Care and Childcare sectors**. This means more focus on wage levels, career progression opportunities, and investment needed to build this vital workforce. Specific action is needed from the Scottish Government to ensure that local funding settlements are sufficient to meet commitments to fair work in these critical sectors, and that contracting is conditional on the delivery of fair work in these sectors which underpin the city's economic infrastructure as well as child development and the care and wellbeing of disabled adults, carers and older people.

WHAT WORKS: Living Wage Places

The Living Wage Foundation and Living Wage Scotland have worked over several years to support and encourage employers to pay their staff the real Living Wage. Last year the two organisations, with the support of Carnegie UK Trust, launched **Living Wage Places**, a new scheme to harness the power of place, involving local employers, communities and people, to help extend the Living Wage to more workers and lift more people out of low pay.

The model outlines a journey cities and towns can take towards making the real Living Wage the expected norm in their area. Dundee and Glenrothes are among the pioneers in the UK with this approach, and Edinburgh is better placed than almost any other area in Scotland to follow the lead they have set.

It involves the establishment of a local Living Wage Action Group, prepared to work in partnership over a period of three years. In order to receive formal accreditation, this group will need to demonstrate the ambition and commitment to 'Making a Living Wage Place' in their locality by encouraging other local employers to pay the Living Wage and increase the number of people in their area who are paid the real Living Wage.

We think this is a promising approach to focusing local commitment in Edinburgh towards improving low pay. More than that, we think this collaborative effort could and should mark the starting point towards a longer-term commitment to other elements of the **Fair Work Framework**.

5.3 A decent home we can afford to live in

| | |
|---|---|
| <p><i>“The cost of renting privately in Edinburgh continues to rise, and it is now beyond the reach of most people on low incomes even if they are working full-time. This obviously leads to increased pressure on social housing, which in turn puts increased pressure on temporary accommodation, and the people who often end up suffering the most are those who are homeless”</i></p> <p>Edinburgh Poverty Commission contributor</p> | <p><i>“During my 18 months as an Edinburgh Poverty Commissioner, I have become even more convinced than I always have been that an adequate supply of high-quality social rented homes is critical to answering the challenges of inequality, poverty and social exclusion.”</i></p> <p>Craig Sanderson Edinburgh Poverty Commission Member</p> |
|---|---|

The challenge Edinburgh faces

There is no pathway to ending poverty in Edinburgh without resolving the city’s housing crisis.

“Rents are fast outpacing people’s ability to pay.”

Edinburgh Poverty Commission contributor

Throughout the discussions we have had with people in the city during the past two years, housing is the one topic that has come up in every conversation. In our survey work with citizens, four in five (79%) respondents said that a lack of affordable housing is a main driver of

poverty in the city⁶. Private sector rents are too high for households on low and modest incomes to manage and there are not enough genuinely affordable homes to go around.

Within this system, the overriding feeling of trying to find and maintain a home on a low income in Edinburgh is one of powerlessness. We heard people’s experiences of long stays in temporary accommodation, and the way that some forms of support can place inadvertent obstacles in the way of efforts to keep a job and progress out of homelessness. The high rents, and the need for expensive deposits restrict and restrain the options for low-income private renters to move or manage their costs. Lothian is one of only three ‘broad rental market areas’ in Scotland to have seen average rents increase substantially ahead of prices in the past five years.

At the same time, tenants and people stuck for too long in temporary accommodation told us the systems to allocate social housing can feel unclear and unfair. We believe the root cause is the severe rationing of social housing, a good in short supply. But this is not only about investment in new homes: The Improvement Service’s Local Government Benchmarking Framework paints a picture of a city that had been lagging the Scottish Housing Quality Standard but has been improving steadily in the two years to 2018-19.

⁶ Sources for all data referred to in this section are available in the Data and Evidence paper that accompanies this report.

There is still some way to go: one in seven council houses in the city don't meet common quality standards compared with around one in twenty across Scotland. In private rented housing, a mix of licensing, regulatory and conditional investment should be used to improve housing quality where it is poor, including loan finance to upgrade heating systems and reduce energy bills for tenants.

Edinburgh is the least affordable Scottish city in which to buy or rent a home. The average house now costs more than 6 and a half times the average full-time wage. The average advertised price of a private rented flat in Edinburgh has grown over the past ten years at an annual rate well over double the rate of growth in earnings. Across Scotland typical rents equate to one-third of average earnings – in Edinburgh in 2020 that ratio has risen to 45%.

Rental affordability has also been exacerbated by the proliferation of short term lets in recent years. According to some estimates 1 in 10 properties in the city centre were listed on Airbnb in 2019 with a total of 12,000 properties listed across Edinburgh as a whole, intensifying supply constraints within an already pressured housing market. Other research shows that housing stock in areas of the city popular with short term lets has fallen by as much as 30%.

The link between these challenges and poverty is clear. Our estimates suggest that 22,600 people in Edinburgh are pushed into poverty by the cost of housing alone – this equates to 29% of all people in poverty, more than double the Scottish proportion in poverty only due to the cost of paying the rent. Taking this analysis further, we estimate that 15,000 people in the city could live free of poverty if the cost of housing in the city were more in line with the Scottish average.

There is a clear link too between these housing market pressures, and the challenges the city faces in tackling homelessness. Tenancy loss as a cause of homelessness in Edinburgh is more than double the Scottish rate while over the past six years, loss of tenancy from the private rented sector has shown the highest increase amongst all reasons for homelessness.

Finding a suitable home for people experiencing homelessness has remained a significant challenge for the city. The average length a household stays in temporary accommodation rose by one-third over the past three years to almost 8 months in 2019/20. These increases come even though Edinburgh already allocated a higher proportion of social lets – both Council and RSL – to homeless households pre-Covid than any other part of Scotland. Seven in ten (72%) of all the Council's housing lets was to homeless households in 2019/20.

All this evidence points to a clear gap between demand and supply of housing in Edinburgh. To end poverty the city most fundamentally must find ways to provide more homes that people can afford to live in. More action is also needed to help prevent homelessness in the first place and to improve the experience of people seeking support. The extraordinary response to the pandemic saw people who had been sleeping rough and in hostels being accommodated with wraparound support with speed and

compassion. Working with third sector partners, the City of Edinburgh Council should ensure a sustainable and fully resourced service is in place to provide the holistic support people need to get and sustain a tenancy. At the same time, we have heard the frustrations of frontline staff who feel restricted in the support they can offer and by the long average stays in temporary accommodation. There is common ground between them and people in the city who need a secure housing solution. None of the actions we are calling for can fully succeed unless the city can build enough homes with appropriate support to meet the needs of its population.

Edinburgh is committed already to an ambitious housebuilding plan including the 20,000 new affordable homes spanning homes for social rent, mid-market rent and low-cost ownership, and there is strong evidence of innovation in the way social landlords – including the Council - are working to meet this challenge. This includes innovation in funding mechanisms, to attract new forms of investment over and above grant subsidy from the Scottish Government. But we know that even this level of ambition will not be enough to meet the anticipated need for affordable homes in Edinburgh over the next decade.

Going beyond current plans will require a fundamental change in the way housing investment is made and supported in Edinburgh. [Recent evidence](#) from the Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence confirms our view on the importance of an increased supply of social rented housing and the wider role of good social landlords as community anchors. Put simply, high housing costs are a financial burden for people on low incomes, damaging work incentives and wellbeing. Boosting the availability of social rented homes, in mixed income neighbourhoods close to the amenities and job opportunities we all need and with rents significantly lower than the private sector, will reduce poverty and the social security bill in Edinburgh.

A Housing Need and Demand Assessment is a technical document which sets out the estimated total additional future housing need across all tenures over a 20-year period. The most recent [Housing Need and Demand Assessment](#) for City of Edinburgh provided scenarios suggesting a need/demand for between 39,099 to 49,902 affordable homes in the city over the period 2019 to 2032, or at least 3,000 per year.

This estimate is broadly confirmed by [recent research](#) commissioned in May 2020 by Shelter Scotland, CIH Scotland, and the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations. This research finds a need for 53,000 new affordable homes across all of Scotland over the period 2021 to 2026 and the three commissioning organisations recommended that between 66-70% (up to 37,100) of these should be new social rented homes.

Within the 'capital city region' – incorporating Edinburgh, East Lothian, Midlothian, West Lothian, Fife, and Scottish Borders – a need for 6,215 new affordable homes a year is identified between 2021 and 2026. Assuming that at least 50-60% of this region's need is likely to be located in Edinburgh itself, this again equates to some 3,000 affordable homes per annum. Following the Scotland-wide ratio implies that at least 2,000 of this need is for social rented homes.

The city's capacity to build quality homes for social rent is, however, highly dependent on Scottish

Government grant funding which pays for almost 50% of development costs. Current grant funding arrangements fall an estimated £70m short of the level needed to meet even the city's existing housing commitments, and any further shortfall will create an even wider gap. The first step towards solving the housing crisis in Edinburgh, therefore, rests upon a new commitment from Scottish Government to ensure that its upcoming Housing Investment plans beyond 2021 commit to resetting the geographic balance of funding across Scotland, taking full account of the unique pressures faced in the capital city. Put simply, Edinburgh's housing challenge is to a large extent Scotland's housing challenge. The Scottish Government cannot meet its own ambitions for reducing child poverty, ending homelessness and addressing housing shortages without a radical change in the way housing investment in Edinburgh is supported.

While we believe that many of the answers to poverty in Edinburgh will be found within the city's existing powers and assets, this is one challenge that requires a new, long-term settlement with the Scottish Government to help address the shortfall in grant funding relative to need and to other parts of the country. This will help the city to attract other forms of 'patient' capital – for example from ethical pension funds – and will serve as a much-needed economic stimulus for the city's construction sector and supply chains as we recover from Covid.

The action needed

The Scottish Government and City of Edinburgh Council should commit to ensuring that **all citizens have a decent home as a human right**, and to taking all steps needed to ensure the city's return to activity following Covid does not result in a return to rough sleeping or evictions into homelessness on financial grounds.

Edinburgh needs to build an estimated **3,000 affordable homes, including 2,000 social rented homes per annum** to meet its housing needs over the next decade, according to our estimates. But this need cannot be met under current funding arrangements. As an urgent priority, the **Scottish Government** should meet with city partners and ensure that its next Housing Investment Plan is sufficient to address Edinburgh's housing crisis.

Alongside grant funding, meeting these challenges will require new steps to address **the cost and availability of land** in Edinburgh. Towards this, it is critical that future city plans secure a **minimum 35% affordable housing contribution** from new developments in Edinburgh. Longer term, it is important that UK and Scottish Governments **reform tax systems to reduce pressure on land prices** in cities like Edinburgh.

We have welcomed the important steps that the UK Government made in temporarily increasing Local Housing Allowance levels to 30% of local benchmark rents in response to the Covid crisis, but we are concerned that the planned removal of this increase next April will result in many more people facing a growing shortfall between rental commitments and support with housing costs, at a time when

employment options for many will be restricted. We want to avoid these families being pushed into poverty. The UK Government should set **Local Housing Allowance levels at a rate sufficient to meet median rents in Edinburgh**, at least as a temporary measure through recovery from recession, and maintain the LHA at 30% of local rents permanently.

We have also welcomed Scottish Government **legal protections against eviction into homelessness for rent arrears** during the current crisis, but are similarly concerned that relaxation of these measures will result in a new wave of evictions next year. The Scottish Government should extend current protections to the end of 2021, and act now to strengthen measures and supports to ensure private landlords and tenants agree genuinely affordable repayment plans for rent arrears.

City of Edinburgh Council should commit to making maximum use of new powers to **regulate and license short term letting in the city** and aim to secure as many properties as possible for long term letting.

City of Edinburgh Council should expand and improve **early person-centred advice and advocacy services to prevent homelessness**, including specific support to help private rented tenants stay in their home when this is a sustainable option, draw upon Discretionary Housing Payments when they are eligible, maximise their incomes and manage their living costs. More broadly, housing and homelessness support services should be part of early phase work to implement holistic service models based on the 'right support in the places we live and work' principles set out earlier in this report.

Increases in private rents are one of the biggest challenges the city faces, but one of the hardest to address through the policy levers available at present. In carrying on the conversations this commission has started, the city needs a **new alliance between City of Edinburgh Council, private rented tenants and landlords** to build common ground and co-design practical measures to slow down rent growth in Edinburgh.

"Now is the moment to think and act big, by putting truly affordable housing at the centre of Scotland's recovery from COVID-19 to permanently end rough sleeping and to mitigate the expected spike in homelessness envisaged as more people struggle to recover from the pandemic."

Diana Noel Paton, Edinburgh Poverty Commission member

5.4 Income security that offers a real lifeline

| | |
|--|--|
| <p><i>"I'm a working single mum who was made redundant while on maternity leave to my 3rd "capped" child. I found myself stuck... Job centre didn't know how to help get me back to work. Not one person could advise me on getting back to work coz there is no help with a 3rd child... There is no interest in the wellbeing of low income families. Food banks are keeping people fed."</i></p> <p>Edinburgh Poverty Commission contributor</p> | <p><i>"Universal Credit and other types of support need to be less about 'we're going to catch you out' and more 'we're going to help you out'. It doesn't create a sustainable relationship between people and the services they are using. We'll never build trust unless we move in that direction."</i></p> <p>Chris Kilkenny Edinburgh Poverty Commission Member</p> |
|--|--|

The challenge Edinburgh faces

Before the Covid crisis, we knew already that there were many people in poverty in Edinburgh existing on less than they might have if they had been aware of, or taken up all the support they were entitled to.

Across the UK, DWP estimates tell us that 40% of households do not claim Pension Credits that they are entitled to; 20% of those entitled to Housing Benefit do not claim their entitlement; and 10% of those entitled to Income Support/Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (IS/ESA) do not claim their benefits⁷. No official estimates on benefits take up in Edinburgh are published, but based on the city's share of population and income our estimates suggest that some £70-80m of these key income related benefits may be unclaimed in this city every year.

Many people are often simply not aware of the range of social security payments that could help make ends meet. They are also often frustrated with the processes they have to undergo to receive entitlements. They feel judged, shamed and fearful about putting existing support at risk. For some of these families the amount of unclaimed benefit may be not be significant, but our inquiry has revealed many examples of people whose lives have been improved substantially by support to help them maximise their take up of entitlements. On average, DWP estimates that unclaimed Housing Benefit amounts to £2,900 per year for each entitled family who does not take up the benefit. For Pension Credits and IS/ESA these averages rise to £2,000 and £4,100 per year respectively.

⁷ Department for Work and Pensions, Income-related benefits: estimates of take-up: financial year 2017 to 2018, available via https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/867973/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-2017-2018.pdf

We knew too, that even if all benefits were claimed, the long-run impact of the benefit freeze until April 2020, the benefit caps and the 2-child limit meant that working-age people were often still left with not enough to live on. The gains from a rising minimum wage have too often been more than undone by these cuts. We heard many stories and reviewed much evidence to support the conclusion that the UK's social security system has been failing.

These failings have real consequences. The UK's Social Security system is a critical lifeline which supports almost all of us at various times in our lives and is part of a wider system of public services – like education, roads, and the police - that we all rely on to maintain a decent standard of living⁸. Scottish Government estimates tell us that even median income households derive around a quarter of their income (23%) from social security payments.



Since the onset of the pandemic, the importance of that lifeline has been clearer than ever. We are seeing a record increase in Universal Credit claimants in the city, alongside the potential of a new debt and mental health crisis for people on low incomes. Half of all families on Universal Credit say that they were struggling to pay their rent and other bills during the Covid lockdown, while 65% say their mental health was being affected by concerns about money⁹.

The experience of recent years has shown that government responses can make a profound difference to the number of people living in poverty. Despite a high and stable employment rate until Spring 2020, cuts to the value and reach of benefits in and out of work are the biggest single driver behind the increase in child poverty seen in recent years. At the same time, temporary increases in the value of Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit made in April for a year – combined with the scale of furlough schemes - have helped to dampen the growth of poverty rates in 2020, despite record increases in unemployment. It is vitally important that governments work together to make sure these short-term gains are not lost by a planned reversion to previous payment levels which were already less adequate than originally planned by the architects of Universal Credit.

⁸ Brook, Paul et al (2019), *Framing Toolkit: Talking About Poverty*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation & Frameworks Institute, available via <https://www.jrf.org.uk/blog/five-doodles-help-make-sense-uk-poverty>

⁹ Maddison, F (2020), *A lifeline for our children: Strengthening the social security system for families with children during this pandemic*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Save the Children, available via <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/call-stronger-social-security-lifeline-children>

Longer term we want to see more fundamental reform of the way social security systems provide a lifeline for people when they need it. As a society, we have committed to dignity in retirement: successive governments have put in place measures which have more than halved the rate of pensioner poverty. We need to see the same level of ambition for working age people, to ensure that when insecure work, redundancy, disability, caring or illness restricts people's ability to earn a decent living, we commit to a minimum level of income below which no one falls.

These are serious challenges that need national action, but the evidence we have seen during our inquiry has also demonstrated the power of local action to fill in gaps and help keep people's heads above water. Edinburgh made the right choice in the early months of the Covid crisis to automatically channel free school meal payments in cash to all families who were receiving them and, with the support of the Scottish Government in June, continued to make those payments during school holidays. It is vital that Edinburgh continues the good work it is already doing to ensure that locally administered payments are automated wherever possible to remove the complexity and stigma experienced by some with claiming.

At the same time, we have seen that Edinburgh is already a leader in the field of money advice and advocacy. Projects like [Maximise!](#) rank among the best and highest impact approaches seen anywhere in the UK. To end poverty, it is essential that the innovation and progress made in this area is built upon in the coming years, with high quality advice, advocacy and wellbeing support embedded in key public services in all parts of the city and available to all communities.

With most people who live in poverty in Edinburgh being in working families, and social security only accounting for half of the income of the lowest income households, we know that a stronger social security system alone is not enough to end poverty. As we have seen, fair work and genuinely affordable housing needs to do its share of the 'heavy lifting.' But we know too that we can do much better. The actions we describe in this section will by themselves represent a substantial step towards reversing the upward trend in child poverty in Edinburgh. Without these changes the system will continue to fail, stigmatise and constrain people when they need it most.

The action needed

Edinburgh Partnership and City of Edinburgh Council should work with third sector partners to ensure consistent, proactive, high impact support to maximise household income, reduce debt and boost family prospects is embedded in every nursery, school and GP surgery in the city. Building on best practice examples such as Maximise!, this approach should combine welfare rights and debt advice, advice on managing living costs, housing support, holistic family support, employability, and healthy living advice. Extension of this support is critical to ensuring that Edinburgh drives down the £80m of eligible DWP benefits which city residents are currently not taking up.

Cutting benefits in the middle of a recession is the wrong thing to do. The UK Government should **commit to keeping the increase in Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit, as well as Local Housing Allowance, from April 2021** and extend this uplift to other legacy benefits. This will maintain demand in local economies during a recession and prevent thousands of families in the city from being pulled into poverty and the higher demand for other services this would be likely to trigger.

Further, in support of campaigns by JRF and Save the Children, we agree that the UK Government should introduce an **urgent increase of £20 per week in the child element of Universal Credit and Child Tax Credit**. The UK Government should also lift the 2-child limit and the benefits cap.

We welcome the Scottish Government's decision to open applications for the **Scottish Child Payment** to eligible families with younger children this year, but more is needed. The Scottish Government should take urgent action to extend applications for families with children aged six and over using local government payment channels to reach at least some eligible families faster than current plans. During an economic crisis families in most need cannot wait until the end of 2022 for this support.

At the local level, the **Scottish Welfare Fund** is a lifeline for families and during the Covid period has played a critical role in supporting people who were reaching crisis point. During our inquiry, however, we met too many people who could benefit but were not aware of this support. City of Edinburgh Council should take a lead on more active promotion of the crisis support available in the city – including welfare funds, advice and advocacy services – to make sure these lifelines can reach anyone who needs them.

Longer term action is needed to **implement bold changes to social security in Scotland**. The UK and Scottish Governments should commit to ensuring that the building of a new support system for Scotland is based on a fundamental objective of providing income security sufficient for people in Edinburgh to live free of poverty. We welcome the learning from research into ideas such as Citizen's Basic Income and a Minimum Income Guarantee, and encourage further exploration of the ways such innovations might provide a pathway towards that objective.

Edinburgh Partnership and City of Edinburgh Council should lead on the roll out of new programmes to **'poverty proof' all public services**. Expanding on successful programmes such as '1in5' in schools, partners should commit to ensuring any costs under the direct control of city authorities are affordable, and that any debts or arrears are managed over the long term on fair repayment terms and with compassionate support.

Edinburgh Partnership should make available new long-term investment to expand the **availability of and access to affordable credit** in all parts of the city through examples such as Scotcash and the credit union movement. Such investments should be part of a long-term programme to boost responsible lending and financial inclusion in Edinburgh.

WHAT WORKS – Maximise!

The Maximise! team is one of the best examples we have encountered during our inquiry of a project finding innovative ways to collaborate across sectors, to break down barriers, and to help struggling families in Edinburgh improve financial resilience and health and wellbeing.

[Maximise!](#) is a Family Advice and Support Project delivered in partnership by Children 1st and CHAI (Community Help and Advice Initiative) and supported by NHS Lothian, the City of Edinburgh Council and Capital City Partnership.

Based in targeted schools across Edinburgh, the model is made up of integrated teams of staff offering advice on benefits, debt or housing problems, employability and family wellbeing support. Families can select the areas of support they engage with and they can move through and engage with the model of support in a manner and pace which suits their situation.

Every practitioner in the Maximise! Team identifies ‘building relationships with families’ as central to their practice and to the success of the approach in helping families. Emerging research by University of Edinburgh found that across each strand of service delivery approximately 70-80% of practice time was noted to involve relational efforts to build, or in many cases re-build, individual confidence and trust in others.

5.5 Opportunities that drive justice and boost prospects

"My depression comes from not having enough or able to give my kids not what they want but what they need. I battle every day to ensure my kids are loved, but do they know they are loved when all they hear is 'sorry we can't do that today' or 'you can't have that today'. I do not want the choices I have had to make in their life affect their health, education, or wellbeing all because I just simply didn't have the money!"

Edinburgh Poverty Commission contributor

"We all need to understand the cumulative impact of poverty on people's opportunities to progress. The stress, anxiety and trauma that comes from constantly worrying about food, energy and how costs will be covered. The worry for the safety, health and wellbeing of yourself and those close to you. Helping learners overcome these concerns – from basic food provision through to emotional support – so they can actually give attention to learning is crucial."

Stephen Kelly, Edinburgh Poverty Commission Member

The challenge Edinburgh faces

The impact of inequality is perhaps illustrated most starkly in the opportunities available to you depending on your income and where you live in Edinburgh.

Education in Edinburgh is more polarised than anywhere else in Scotland. The city has more pupils in independent schools in the city than any other part of Scotland. Six state schools in the city account for more than half of all pupils who live in the most deprived (first SIMD quintile) areas of the city, but only 2% of those from more affluent (fifth SIMD quintile) areas. At the same time, a group of seven other schools account for two thirds of all pupils from affluent areas, but only 10% of those from more deprived areas¹⁰.

Despite the significant efforts evident to close the attainment gap, Edinburgh is making slower progress than many other areas in Scotland. As the evidence paper that accompanies this report shows, there is slow progress at each stage except in P1 where the gap for key measures has stalled or widened. We have seen the pressure many headteachers are under to analyse a raft of data and deliver change on a range of school, city and national level indicators. Alongside that pressure, we have seen the positive work that can be done in some schools where a forensic approach to understanding the circumstances and needs of individual pupils means that personalised support can be put in place involving a range of services.

Across the system, however, Edinburgh seems to entrench inequality, doing better for more affluent pupils than the national average while doing worse for those from deprived neighbourhoods.

This is in large part a reflection of the city's residential polarisation. Inequality in school carries forward to opportunities beyond school as high-quality work experience and exposure to the world of work is still too

¹⁰ Scottish Government Schools Information Dashboard, available via <https://public.tableau.com/profile/sg.eas.learninganalysis#!/vizhome/SchoolInformationDashboard-Secondary/Introduction>

often driven by parental connections. While most young people growing up in poverty go on to live stable, productive lives, they are more likely than their peers to be involved in the criminal justice system – regardless of the nature of their actual offending behaviour - and contact with the criminal justice system increases the likelihood of continued offending. Only 11% of entrants to higher education in Edinburgh are from the 20% most deprived areas, compared to 19% nationally¹¹.

Covid has acted to widen these inequalities with a marked gradient between participation in education in private and state sectors and between the affluent and socio-economically deprived. One survey of 1,000 disadvantaged pupils across Scotland, for instance, showed that two thirds were unable to do school work during lockdown. One in four could not do any work because they had to care for others, while two-thirds said they felt low, anxious and stressed¹². Significant fears have been voiced by many of the lasting impact of a growing gap in educational attainment as a result of this experience.

Many of those we have spoken to reflect that the inequality of opportunity apparent for children and young people in Edinburgh is evident also for adults and particular groups in the city. We have heard of restricted opportunities for black and minority ethnic people, often highly qualified and working below their level of qualification. They feel they do not have access to opportunities which would enable them to take control of their lives and earn their way out of poverty.

We have heard from many that childcare, learning and employment opportunities are not flexible enough to enable parents to balance improving their prospects with caring for their families. We heard about a 60% increase in mental health disclosures at Edinburgh College over the last two years reflecting the stresses of balancing work, learning, childcare and living costs. Professionals also told us how the positive development delivered through early learning, childcare and education can be limited or undermined when it is delivered in isolation for the child and not integrated with wider family support. This is particularly illustrated in attainment for looked after children, which is consistently lower than for those living in the most deprived areas, and is reflected in [The Promise's](#) focus on more integrated family support following the Independent Care Review.

This inequality of opportunity represents not only a challenge of structures and resource allocation, but also one of attitude and culture. For too long Edinburgh appears to have tolerated and been unwilling to address these injustices. The significant investments and genuine efforts to tackle the attainment gap in state schools will fail if we do not also address structural and cultural barriers.

¹¹ Scottish Funding Council, Report on Widening Access 2018-19 available via <http://www.sfc.ac.uk/publications-statistics/statistical-publications/2020/SFCST062020.aspx>

¹² MCR Pathways Lockdown Survey: Listening To The Voices Of Our Young People July 29, 2020, available via <https://mcrpathways.org/mcr-pathways-lockdown-survey-listening-to-the-voices-of-our-young-people/>

To end poverty in the city, Edinburgh needs to make a long-term commitment to be a city which values justice over privilege, by expanding access to high quality opportunities for all its citizens. Making this change will require action to improve understanding and awareness of poverty throughout the education system in Edinburgh, action to address structural issues which embed inequality and segregation, and action to embed approaches that are proven to build opportunities and improve prospects.

The action needed

City of Edinburgh Council and all state schools need to invest in a significant programme to **codesign action with young people and families living in poverty**. They must build on the learning from approaches to close the attainment gap, continuing to evaluate and crucially **investing in local organisations working alongside families** to build the foundations of a generational shift in opportunity.

City of Edinburgh Council should establish a deliberative process for all schools (including private) and their communities to **increase awareness and understanding of poverty** in the city (building on the 1 in 5 programme) to contribute to long term culture change and broad-based citizen support for **building more equal communities with fairer opportunities for all**.

Private schools in Edinburgh have a responsibility to do more to positively overcome segregation and inequality in the city. This means more action to share teaching, infrastructure and networks with local state schools and community groups – including for example sports facilities, digital learning links to widen subject choice where it is currently restricted, and access to a wider range of employers and individuals who could make valuable connections with state schools.

City of Edinburgh Council needs to act **to develop genuinely mixed school catchment areas** by 2030. This means long term commitment to develop mixed income neighbourhoods, review school catchments where opportunities arise, and ensuring decision on school placements, school building and investment reflect this aim.

Edinburgh's Universities must do more to make a positive impact on **improving opportunities for people on low incomes or living in disadvantaged areas in Edinburgh** to access and complete higher education and go on to high quality employment.

We believe there is a mindset shift needed in the approach to measurement. **City of Edinburgh Council should reduce the pressure on schools to report performance on comparative attainment ladders**. All schools should take a diagnostic approach to using live data on attendance, behaviour and crucially engagement to track progress and underpin the provision of rich experiences and enjoyment in school.

City of Edinburgh Council should **ensure early years learning and childcare support is integrated with family support** which is provided with flexibility of hours to enable parents and carers to work or learn and care for their families (drawing on example of Flexible Childcare Services Scotland www.fcsc.org.uk).

Edinburgh Partnership members should invest resources in a **radical expansion of mentoring schemes in Edinburgh**, to reach every school in the city with effective screening and matching to support looked after and struggling young people to improve engagement with learning.

We call on citizens from a wide range of backgrounds to **participate in managed mentoring schemes for children and young people and seek opportunities to champion individual schools, building positive relationships and bridges to a wider range of experiences and opportunities.**

City of Edinburgh Council and Edinburgh Partnership must commit to **monitoring and reporting on inclusion of and impacts for** people living on low incomes and from disadvantaged areas, and from equalities groups, in all learning and employment opportunities in the city.

WHAT WORKS – Child and Youth Mentoring

***Intandem** is Scotland's mentoring programme for young people aged 8-14, looked after at home. The programme aims to help provide young people with at least one long term relationship with a positive adult role model. Intandem matches young people with trained volunteers to build trusting, supportive and secure relationships which are supported to continue even if a young person's home circumstances change. Among common values, it is important that the programme is ambitious for young people and celebrates success and that the programme is dedicated and consistent providing support for as long as young people need it.*

***MCR Pathways** is a school-based mentoring programme that currently supports around 2300 young people across Scotland each week. The charity works to address the attainment gap between care-experienced young people and their peers with a vision that, "every care-experienced and disadvantaged young person in the country gets the same education outcomes, career opportunities and life chances as every other young person".*

In February 2020, the City of Edinburgh Council and MCR Pathways joined forces to roll out the mentoring programme throughout the city. In part, this followed the local authority's commitment to the Care Review's recommendations, which emphasised the importance of relationship-based practice in schools, including mentoring, to better support young people with experience of the care system.

Over the next three years, the scheme will support and inspire 500 young people in Edinburgh to build aspiration and confidence to fulfil their potential in education, training or employment opportunities of their choice.

5.6 Connections in a city that belongs to us

| | |
|--|---|
| <p><i>LIFT gave me support as single parent, struggling to manage on benefits because I couldn't find work that would fit in around looking after my kids. Then I started volunteering to help others and now have a job with LIFT. I am able to work hours that are suitable for me and my kids, which has given me so much more chance as a working parent and hope for the future</i></p> <p>Claire Baxter, End Poverty Edinburgh</p> | <p><i>If we have learned anything from the last six months it is to value our connections to others within and between our communities. We must do everything we can to help people maintain connections or reconnect across the city, in very practical ways including transport and digital and in the longer term designing places as settings for relationships</i></p> <p>Zoë Ferguson, Edinburgh Poverty Commission</p> |
|--|---|

The challenge Edinburgh faces

Too many people we have spoken to during our inquiry have told us they feel large parts of the city don't belong to them or that many aspects of Edinburgh life feel 'off limits' to them because of their lack of income, or the way they think people will judge them. These issues are particularly strongly voiced when people talk about some of the city's iconic institutions – such as Edinburgh's Festivals or tourist attractions – whose value seems remote to the lives of many citizens.

In addition to feeling that much of Edinburgh is 'off-limits' it can on a very practical basis just be unaffordable to travel and many people have told us they don't have places they want to go in the evening within walking distance of their home.

Bus travel in Edinburgh remains cheaper than in other cities in Scotland, but it is still too expensive for many hospitality workers – a gauge perhaps of how low their wages are and how few hours they can rely upon per week/month. There is also an issue with a lack of public transport for shift workers both early morning and late night. Being unable to afford or get transport to and from work also causes health and safety issues with workers (particularly young women) having to choose between spending 2 hours wages on a taxi home and walking home in the dark. For students the cheapest form of transport isn't always the most efficient to get to and from campuses. Some students have to take up to three buses when they could get one train, because the cost of train fares isn't covered in FE travel bursaries. We have heard that many people cannot afford to buy a monthly travel pass which would be the cheapest option because their income is too low.

While we have all been limited in our enjoyment of the city since the Spring, Covid has intensified the divide in experience:

- Perhaps most of all the experience of Covid has emphasised the importance of local community infrastructure - the value of having shops, quality outdoor and particularly green spaces, and support services available within walking distance of your home. The shift in provision of essential services to local resilience hubs has highlighted a longer term need for support close to home for people or issues which are not well suited to digital / remote approaches;
- While the pattern of movement around the city is still limited and the future largely unknown, we know that pre Covid, the cost and ease of transport across the city was a major barrier to people's ability to hold down jobs, access educational opportunities and support, participate in activities and maintain family and social connections;
- Pre Covid, we know many of those who would most benefit from being digitally connected were least likely to be so – particularly disabled people and those with long-term conditions. Digital exclusion has worsened during the pandemic due to the data costs of greater use being unaffordable for many. Digital connectivity has become an absolute necessity to maintain connections and relationships, but we also know that for many, particularly older people on low incomes, lack of access to digital devices and skills have contributed to many people feeling ever more isolated.

Perhaps one way in which Covid has acted to bring us together rather than divide is in prompting us to care more for our fellow citizens. Neighbours have reached out to provide informal support for each other, huge numbers of people have volunteered to provide vital help and there are [numerous examples](#) of community activists stepping forward to address local needs.

To end poverty in the city, Edinburgh needs to address the way the city's future development is planned, provide support to tackle social isolation and enable connections within and between communities.

The action needed

In the renewal of Edinburgh's Festivals and tourism economy post Covid, Scottish Government and City of Edinburgh Council should ensure that any public funding is conditional on delivery of actions to promote inclusion and equality in the city.

In addition to supporting Fair Work, festival programmes and tourist attractions must improve affordability and access for people in all parts of the city, including schools.

City of Edinburgh Council should ensure planning and design of housing, amenity, employment and services addresses the need for quality spaces, green space, support, activities and opportunities where people live. We support [Edinburgh Climate Commission's](#) call for placing the 20-minute walking (or 'pram pushing') distance principle at the heart of designing all neighbourhoods in Edinburgh.

Starting with Edinburgh as a test site, Scottish Government should **extend eligibility for concessionary travel** to under 25s and to unpaid carers. This is the next step towards our ambition by the end of this decade, that a fleet of low carbon Lothian Buses carries all passengers at no or very low cost.

Edinburgh Partnership members should collaborate with other partners to provide 'single gateway' **easy access to free and concessionary travel**, simplifying highly fragmented schemes already available via schools, employability programmes and Job Centres.

Edinburgh Partnership members should combine resources to develop a **zero-interest loan scheme** to allow low-income passengers to buy long-term travel passes and thus benefit from the lowest fares.

Lothian Buses should **commit to listening to the voice of low-income passengers in the city**, and ensure routes and timetables adapt to enable people from all communities to access work locations – including early shifts and night-time economy jobs - and participate in the life of the city.

City of Edinburgh Council should work with city partners including specialist third sector organisations like People Know How to improve affordability, availability of broadband, and digital equipment, and to **promote digital inclusion** and skills. At the same time, they must ensure people can speak to someone on the phone or face to face when that is what they need or prefer.

There is a challenge for Edinburgh residents too: we call on citizens **not to let go of the connections they have made**, to continue to reach out to each other, to engage within their own and other communities across the city whether formally as volunteers or mentors, or informally as good neighbours.

WHAT WORKS – Low Income Families Together

Established in November 2017, Low Income Families Together (LIFT) is a support and advocacy project based in the Muirhouse Millennium Centre in the north of Edinburgh. It provides an integrated, specialist advisory service covering issues such as housing, benefits and debt advice, linking and enabling progress to relevant services and skills training for employability.

Through one-to-one and group support, LIFT seeks to develop a stable and positive environment for families and the community through encouraging peer interaction and tackling social isolation. As well as practical support, such as financial budgeting, LIFT staff and volunteers offer emotional support to increase the confidence, wellbeing and self-esteem of people.

LIFT provides immediate help in crisis but also sticks with families as long as support is needed. Support is personalised, holistic and enables people to build confidence to take control of their life and contribute to their community.

5.7 Equality in our health and wellbeing

| | |
|---|--|
| <p><i>“My experience as an employee with a recognised mental health disability and nearing retirement age has been one of not feeling valued enough or understood, to be considered and supported for advancement up the career ladder. This mindset needs to change. We are all human and we all have problems.”</i></p> <p>Denise List, EndPovertyEdinburgh</p> | <p><i>“I have serious concerns about young people and men who are at risk of suicide since Covid restrictions came into force. This has to be highlighted, and we need to do more to reach out and help people connect to mental health support”</i></p> <p>Betty Stevenson, Edinburgh Poverty Commission member</p> |
|---|--|

The challenge Edinburgh faces

Scotland has long held the shameful position of the sick man of Europe, with some of the widest health inequalities. There is clear evidence that poverty and wider income inequalities, combined with planning decisions grouping low income households together in poor quality social housing drives this unenviable reputation. Multiple public health initiatives have failed to deliver any sustained narrowing of the gap because we have not effectively addressed the underlying determinants.

Edinburgh shows higher than average levels of health and wellbeing compared with Scotland, but health inequalities are very wide, reflecting inequalities in income, wealth and power. Citizens in the most deprived areas of the city experience significantly poorer physical health, higher incidence of poor mental health and higher levels of premature mortality than those in better-off parts of the city. A boy born in New Town West can expect to live on average 21.4 years longer than one born in Greendykes/Niddrie Mains.¹³

Through all our work, we have heard that poverty takes an intolerable toll on people’s mental health. Great hardship is caused by a combination of poor material circumstances and the way people in poverty are often treated. We know from Scottish Government data that you are three times more likely to have below average wellbeing in the most deprived areas compared to the least and at GP practices like Craigmillar Medical Group and Muirhouse Medical Centre, poor mental health is the predominant feature in half of all consultations.

Even before the pandemic, our health services were insufficient alone and not equipped to address the root causes of significant health inequalities in the city. People living in deprived areas experience longer

¹³ Sources for all data referenced in this section are available in the Evidence paper that accompanies this report.

waiting times, shorter appointments and lower empowerment, while GPs in practices in deprived areas experience higher levels of stress.

By mid-September, a total of 2,150 positive cases of the virus had occurred in Edinburgh and sadly 429 deaths had been registered. The virus has shone a very bright light on pre-existing inequalities and injustices. The most socio-economically deprived have been and continue to be more likely to die. Between March and September, people in the most deprived areas in Scotland were just over twice as likely to die with Covid than those living in the least deprived areas. There is also evidence of increased risks of serious illness due to COVID-19 in those of South Asian origin, with a two-fold increase in risk of needing critical care or dying within 28 days of a positive test. There is also evidence of an increased risk of hospitalisation among Scots of Black, Caribbean or African ethnicity. It is estimated that half of excess Covid mortality in black and ethnic minority populations is accounted for by poverty. In addition, the largest rise in excess mortality for non-Covid deaths occurred in the most deprived areas. Inequality by this measure was 30% higher than average for the previous five years. Those in the lowest paid jobs have been the least likely to work from home during the pandemic and consequently most at risk of infection.

At the most basic level, an estimated 10,000 adults in Edinburgh reported 'running out of food' at least once in the past 12 months because of a lack of money. Since Covid the efforts to provide food for people, initially assumed to be primarily for those self-isolating, has uncovered a much larger number of people experiencing food insecurity. To a very large degree, this is a symptom of falling incomes, rising costs and vulnerability of support networks which needs to be addressed upstream. In our interim report we highlighted the large number of organisations who had stepped in and shifted their purpose to ensure food was reaching those in need. Over the lockdown, significant collaboration between the Council, EVOC, and a wide range of voluntary organisations developed a systematic approach to food provision

We know Covid has exacerbated anxiety and depression and the Royal College of Psychiatrists predicts the impact could widen mental health inequalities for a generation. Our interim report highlighted the impacts of Covid on mental health including bereavement, increased numbers of people in circumstances causing trauma and stress and intensified impacts. We have heard particularly the concern for young people in our communities and increasing risk of suicide. We welcome [Thrive Edinburgh's](#) focus on mental health and recognise more than ever the need for city partners to get behind a holistic approach to improving mental health and wellbeing.

Covid has shown more clearly than ever the causal link between poverty, ill health and premature death. Its economic impacts are very likely to result in many more people becoming unemployed and living on much reduced incomes. Support and services everywhere will need to respond as we expect to see a rising tide of poverty.

The effects of the virus are likely to be long lasting with or without a second wave in the winter, reflected in a long tail of physical and mental illness for many and the lasting impact of trauma. Some services have been transformed during the pandemic, including through a welcome enhanced recognition of the importance of flexible, holistic community-based services and a greater emphasis on digital service provision. The effects on people in poverty and wider equalities groups of such service transformation needs to be assessed.

The impact of Covid in care homes has posed urgent and fundamental questions about the way in which we look after our old and vulnerable people. We have allowed a fragmented system, which essentially aims to mitigate decline, to fail in shocking measure. We welcome the recent announcement of a review of social care and consideration of a National Care Service. This review needs to be of the same scale and level of ambition as the Independent Care Review if we are to appropriately value old and vulnerable people within our communities.

To end poverty in the city, Edinburgh needs to tackle structural issues impacting on health inequalities and redesign services, support and systems of care to enable wellbeing, from the earliest years through to old age.

The action needed

Fundamentally **we must address the preceding actions in this report** in order to make a clear and significant impact on the health and wellbeing of low-income citizens and reduce health inequalities.

City of Edinburgh Council, EVOG and local organisations must **continue to fund, co-ordinate and operate services to provide quality fresh food to citizens who experience food insecurity**, avoiding a return to reliance on food banks. Our call to improve income security is key to replacing the need for food provision, combined with action to develop place-based approaches to bring together healthy eating, sustainability and community development.

The Edinburgh Partnership needs to invest and work with local organisations alongside primary care teams in order to provide community-based supports and activities which **enable positive wellbeing and enable people living with long term health conditions to self-manage with peer and specialist support and to live well in their communities**. This could helpfully be linked to the creation of a network of community treatment centres to manage conditions and community health and wellbeing services supporting children and young people, announced in the recent Programme for Government.

The city will need to make a significant and sustained effort to improve mental health, responding both to the impact of recent trauma and the underlying causes of mental health inequalities. **The Edinburgh Partnership and employers must invest in early intervention, first aid and holistic approaches**.

Awareness raising and **basic training can enable citizens to be confident in peer support and first level responding** carrying forward the empathy and reaching out to others they have already shown.

NHS Lothian should review service transformation to ensure renewal has a sharp focus on addressing health inequalities, maintaining face to face contact where appropriate to establish the trust needed to identify wider issues beyond immediate presentation and deal with medical complexity.

We welcome the announcement of the Scottish Government review of social care and consideration of a National Care Service. In the city's response to that review **we should ensure that investment to support disabled adults, older people and carers is rooted in organisations which are strongly connected to the communities they serve.**

6. Achieving real change

Passing the baton: End Poverty Edinburgh

This report marks the end of the work of this Edinburgh Poverty Commission, but only the beginning of a movement that needs to take root to create an Edinburgh without poverty.

The final act of this commission is to pass on the baton to those who will act to make the changes we have set out in this report, and to those who will hold the city to account for delivering those changes.

The Commission has been working hard to develop a new network provisionally named '**End Poverty Edinburgh**', who will carry on the work we have started. This is a group of Edinburgh citizens we have met during our inquiry, who have expressed their desire and commitment to be a part of the change their city needs to make. Some members have experience of living in poverty, others see the impact of poverty directly through their work and others are allies who care and want to see justice for their fellow citizens.

We believe this group, independently funded and working without oversight from any Edinburgh institution, represents the start of a new citizen-led movement to end poverty in Edinburgh, which will build in force as they are joined by allies from all parts of the city. We are passing the baton to them to:

- **Continue to raise awareness and understanding of the experience of poverty in Scotland's capital city – as real, costly, damaging but also something that can be solved**
- **Influence decisions that are made about how the city works and how institutions should co-design and deliver services, and**
- **Hold the city to account for delivering actions to end poverty in Edinburgh.**

Commitment, starting now

This report describes a big ambition and a large number of discrete actions that need to be delivered in this city. As a Commission we are under no illusions about the scale of the challenge we have set out, and our expectation is not that every action in this report can be delivered in full on day one. We are also clear, though, that the city must now act on the ambition invested in setting up this Commission and that the first year following publication of this report must be one of real commitment and progress

We know and fully recognise that the economic and public health risks facing us bring with them serious financial challenges for all sectors in the city. We are also clear that the next year is a period of change which will to a great degree shape Edinburgh's new ways of working for the next decade.

With these thoughts in mind, we expect:

- **The first twelve months following publication of this report to be a period of implementation and planning** - delivering those actions which can be implemented immediately and planning of those actions which need further development. In particular, we expect:

- All city partners to make a public commitment to end poverty in Edinburgh by 2030, and to delivery of the four core targets set out in this report.
 - City of Edinburgh Council and Edinburgh Partnership to meet with the new End Poverty Edinburgh citizen group to agree ways of working together and define new opportunities for citizens to co-design and influence change in the city.
 - City of Edinburgh Council and Edinburgh Partnership to publish detailed plans setting out how they intend to respond to all the calls for action in this report.
 - City of Edinburgh Council and Edinburgh Partnership to include annual reporting on progress towards delivery of these actions within the [Local Child Poverty Action Reports](#) they are already required to produce. In line with latest Scottish Government guidance, these reports should focus on actions to end poverty for all ages, and all 7 of the action areas described in this report, not only those focused-on poverty as it is experienced by children.
 - The Scottish Government to commit to work with City of Edinburgh Council and other city partners to agree the additional investment, in particular to drive actions on housing and homelessness, needed in the city. As our second largest and fastest growing city it is clear that Scotland cannot meet its ambitions for tackling poverty without support for additional focused action in Edinburgh.
 - All Edinburgh Partnership member organisations should commit, starting within the next budget cycle, to publish an annual statement on the impact they expect their budget decisions to have on the lives and experiences of people in poverty in Edinburgh.
 - Edinburgh Partnership to use its convening powers to bring together city partners including business, private schools, independent funders and philanthropists in order to marshal all the resources of the city to grow a new End Poverty Edinburgh Fund. The purpose of this fund should be to resource innovation in support of the actions described in this report.
- **The period 2022 to 2024 to be one of delivery and acceleration of progress**, in which Edinburgh makes a substantial and evidenced contribution to meeting the Scottish Government’s interim targets for reduction of Child Poverty, as set out in the [Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan](#).
 - **The period 2025 to 2030 to be one of sustained progress and measurable impact**. It is in this period that we expect to see all the actions set out in this report in place, meeting their objectives, and delivering all four of the targets described earlier in this report. By delivering on these actions we are confident that Edinburgh can be, by 2030, a city in which:
 - **No one feels stigmatised, abandoned, or treated with less respect by the city as a result of their income or their wealth**

- **No one has to go without the basic essentials they need to eat, keep clean and stay warm and dry.**
- **Fewer than one in ten children and fewer than one in ten adults are living in relative poverty at any given time, and**
- **No-one lives in persistent poverty.**

7. A big thank you

The past 18 months have represented, we think, the largest single inquiry on the experiences, causes, and solutions to poverty ever conducted in any local authority area in Scotland. During the course of this inquiry we have heard from over 1,000 participants, met or heard from over 70 organisations, held over 100 evidence sessions, and published 7 reports or research papers.

None of this could have taken place without the enthusiastic support of the people of Edinburgh who have come together to make this Commission work. In closing this report we want to give **a big thank you** to the many individuals too numerous to count who have by turn inspired, encouraged, disseminated and followed the Commission's journey. Whatever improvements are made in Edinburgh as a response to this report, they will happen because of you and the clarity with which you have articulated the changes you need to see.

We want to offer our thanks to the **City of Edinburgh Council**, and the **Edinburgh Partnership** for convening the Commission and for the resources and support that have made this work possible. In particular we would like to thank elected members from all parties and senior officials from the Council and the Partnership for their openness, honesty, and willingness to engage positively with the challenging questions this Commission has posed.

We would like to thank the **Scottish Government**, and **Joseph Rowntree Foundation** for their support in resourcing the programmes of citizen research and engagement which have been critical to the work of this Commission. Huge thanks also to our partners at **Poverty Alliance** and the **Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit** for their knowledge, creativity and commitment in meeting those research briefs.

And a big thank you too to all our contributors, to all the hosts of our Commission meetings, to all the projects who welcomed us and share their insights with us, and to all the organisations who supported our communications, contributed guest blogs for the Commission's [website](#) and answered the Commission's calls for evidence, including:

| | |
|---|---|
| Bethany Christian Trust | Link Living |
| Blackwood Housing | Lothian Deprivation Interest Group |
| Business in the Community Scotland | Low Income Families Together (LIFT) |
| Capital City Partnership | Maximise! |
| Carnegie UK Trust | Mind the Craic |
| Changeworks | Minority Ethnic Carers of People Project |
| Citadel Youth Centre | Moredun Multis Residents Group |
| Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal PMO | Muirhouse Healthy Living Centre |
| Close the Gap | Multicultural Family Base |
| Community Help and Advice Initiative (CHAI) | My Gracemount |
| Community One Stop Shop | National Association of Welfare Rights Advisors |
| Community Renewal | Next Step |

Craightinny Early Years Centre
Crewe Medical Centre
Cyrenians
DWP
Edinburgh Association of Community Councils
Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce
Edinburgh City Youth Cafe
Edinburgh College

Edinburgh College Students' Association
Edinburgh Evening News
Edinburgh School Uniform Bank
Edinburgh Trust
Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations' Council
Enable Scotland
Firhill Community Council
Foundation Scotland
Foursquare Scotland (Stopover Hostel)
Fresh Start
Gilmerton Community Centre
Granton information Centre
Grassmarket Community Project
Hibs Community Cook Club
Homelink Family Support
Homestart
Invisible Edinburgh
Joined Up 4 Jobs
Liberton High School

NHS Lothian
North Edinburgh Arts
The 1in5 project
Police Scotland
Port of Leith Housing Association
Presence In Action Collective
Preston Street Primary
Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal
Regional Enterprise Council
Professor Sue Ellis, University of Strathclyde
Professor Susan McVie, University of Edinburgh
Save the Children
Scotcash
Scottish Federation of Housing Associations
Shelter Scotland
Social Bite
Space and Broomhouse Hub
Streetwork
The Junction, young people, health & wellbeing
The Ripple
Thistle Foundation
Tron Kirk Foodbank
Turn2Us
Tynecastle High School Equity Improvement Group
Unite Hospitality
University of Edinburgh
University of Edinburgh Students Association
Working Rite

Appendix 1 – Meet the Commissioners



**Dr Jim McCormick
(Chair)**

Associate Director for
Scotland at the Joseph
Rowntree Foundation



**Cllr Cammy Day
(Vice Chair)**

Depute Leader of the City of
Edinburgh Council



Mary Alexander

Deputy Regional Secretary
of Unite the Union



Diana Noel-Paton

Former Chief Executive of
the Thistle Foundation and
citizen of Edinburgh



Zoe Ferguson

Independent analyst and
citizen of Edinburgh



Craig Sanderson

Former Chief Executive of
Link Housing Association
and citizen of Edinburgh



Stephen Kelly

Headteacher of Liberton
High School in Edinburgh



Betty Stevenson

Convener of Edinburgh
Tenants Federation and
citizen of Edinburgh



Chris Kilkenny

Community campaigner and
citizen of Edinburgh



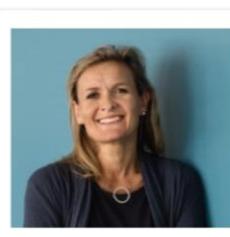
Prof Carol Tannahill

Chief Social Policy Adviser to
the Scottish Government



Sandy MacDonald

Head of Corporate
Sustainability at Standard
Life Aberdeen plc



Celia Tennant

Chief Executive of Inspiring
Scotland