Working Together To Combat Poverty In Scotland
CONVENOR’S STATEMENT

This has been another important year for the Poverty Alliance, one that has brought opportunities as well as challenges. Many of the challenges we have faced are longstanding – the stubbornly high levels of poverty, the continued impact of changes to our social security system, the ongoing stigmatisation of those living on low incomes. Undoubtedly we will now face new challenges in the coming years, particularly as a result of the decision to leave the EU. We have always believed that our ability to address poverty is dependent on a quality of solidarity, and our decision to leave the EU potentially undermines that quality. In this context, the role of the Poverty Alliance in Scotland has never been more important.

This report highlights much of the good work that has been delivered over the last year. Our campaigning work on stigma and poverty, on the Living Wage and on social security has had a real impact over the last year. We have put a renewed emphasis on engaging with our members and building a strong network that can push forward with the opportunities that do exist even in difficult times. Despite the challenges we face, there are undoubtedly real opportunities. The devolution of important social security powers to Scotland, including the power to top up reserved benefits, represents perhaps the greatest opportunity. There are also real opportunities in the new Child Poverty Bill, in the employability powers that we will have, and in the Fairer Scotland Strategy to begin to make bigger impacts on poverty.

We firmly believe that in order to realise these opportunities we need a strong and united anti-poverty network in Scotland, one that brings together large and small voluntary organisations, people with experience of poverty, faith groups, trade unions, all of those involved in civil society as well as in the public and private sectors. Our work over the last year has demonstrated the change that can be made when we work together – all of our collective experience, knowledge and energy is required if we are to truly tackle poverty. I would like to thank all of our members and supporters for their contributions to our work. I would also like to thank the staff team and my fellow board members for all their work over the last year. In particular, I would like to thank Suzi Macpherson the outgoing Convenor of the Board.

She made a great contribution to the organisation in the relatively short time she was with us, and we all wish her well for the future. Finally, I would like to thank all of our funders, particularly the Scottish Government, for their continued support for our work.

Elizabeth Gore
Vice Convenor
Annual reports, despite being an opportunity to reflect on what has been achieved over a year, can sometimes be an imperfect way of assessing whether an organisation is making progress or not. A longer view is what is really needed to judge if what is being carried out is making an impact. In producing this year’s annual report, I have spent a little more time thinking about the changes that I have seen in the 14 years that I have been with the Alliance.

Some of the issues that we have focused on as an organisation over the last year are ones that have been of long standing concern – how to address inadequate incomes, challenging the negative and stigmatising views that exist about poverty, supporting the participation of people with direct experience of poverty. Sometimes progress can seem too slow, but it is clear that progress is being made.

In the area of adequate incomes, for example, we have continued to make progress in addressing in-work poverty. The Scottish Living Wage Accreditation Initiative passed a major milestone in March 2016, accrediting our 500th organisation in Scotland. This achievement has not only meant that there is more money in workers’ pockets, but has also demonstrated that addressing poverty is not simply the job of government. Getting private sector companies to enthusiastically support the Living Wage has been a sign of real progress and one that we will aim to build on in 2016-17.

Of course, Government has a significant role in making poverty reduction a reality. Like many other organisations we actively contributed to the Smith Commission in 2014 and during the course of the last year have worked hard to ensure that the new powers that are delivered to Scotland are used in creative ways to have a real impact on poverty. In the case of social security in Scotland, we are beginning to see real opportunities to use these powers to real effect. There is undoubtedly a long way still to go, but the new emphasis on dignity and respect in social security is something that we have long campaigned for and we are pleased to see the Scottish Government embrace these ideas wholeheartedly.

Issues of stigma have always been central to the work of the Poverty Alliance. We have organised Poverty Awareness Training for many years and highlighted the issue of stigma through our work on the EPIC project between 2009 and 2013. In the last year our Stick

Your Labels (SYL) Campaign has continued to grow. The SYL Organisational Challenge was launched in May 2015 and since then dozens of organisations have signed up, including Health Scotland, the Scottish Government, Renfrewshire Council, Dundee City Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council and many others. These organisations are publically committing to tackle the stigma that many people living in poverty experience, and we are beginning to see changes in policy and practice as a result. And in March 2016, the leaders of all of the political parties in the Scottish Parliament showed their support for SYL.

These are real signs of progress, but there is little doubt that context is a challenging one. The impact of Brexit, the continued freeze on most social security benefits and the rise of xenophobia across the UK makes the task of fighting poverty, of asserting the fundamental right to a decent income and life of dignity, all the more difficult. In this context it is more essential than ever that we strengthen our network in Scotland to enable us to continue to press for the long term changes that we need.

Our work relies on the engagement of hundreds of activists, organisations, and individuals with experience of poverty every year. Without this engagement, detailed throughout this report, we would be unable to make the changes that are so desperately needed. Our work also relies on the passion and commitment of our staff team. I would like to thank them all for the creative, flexible and dynamic way they go about supporting our network. I would also like to thank both Sarah Wiktorski and Lisa Whittaker who left the Poverty Alliance after making a great contribution in a very short time. Finally, I would like to thank Suzi Macpherson, our outgoing Convenor, for all her support and advice that she provided to the organisation over the last few years.

Peter Kelly
Director
KEY ACTIVITIES

In 2015-16 we continued to organise our activities in four key themes:

• Supporting the development of policies which promote social justice and combat poverty

• Working with people and communities to empower them to address poverty

• Building a strong anti-poverty network in Scotland

• Raising awareness about poverty and encouraging debate

INFLUENCING POLICY

The Poverty Alliance undertakes a range of activities to influence policies that can or should have an impact on poverty. We have undertaken lobbying activities at local and national levels, including meetings with politicians and policy makers, attending political conferences, giving evidence in Parliament on a wide range of issues to promote our positions on key areas such as the development of new social security powers, in-work poverty and attitudes to poverty. We have responded to a range of formal consultations, have engaged with a wide range of advisory bodies, and delivered a range of seminars on key policy issues (including this year on sustainable development goals, new welfare powers and intersectionality).

We carried out a wide ranging consultation with community groups across Scotland to feed their views into the Scottish Government’s Fairer Scotland discussion. To support our policy activity we have also carried out research into a wide range of issues including economic restructuring, young people’s experience of housing, food insecurity and business approaches to tackling poverty. We have also carried out practical work to change the policy and practice of employers across Scotland, undertaking a wide range of activities to encourage them to pay the Living Wage.
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Working with community based organisations and with people with direct experience of poverty is a key part of the Poverty Alliance’s work. In 2015-16 we carried out a comprehensive programme of engagement meetings with community based organisations, meeting with 38 organisations over the course of the year and producing a detailed report on these meetings. We also continued to work with our Community Activist Advisory Group (CAAG), ensuring that their views were fed into relevant policy processes. This included supporting members of the CAAG to attend the annual European Meeting of People with experience of Poverty in Brussels in November 2015. The CAAG has become an increasingly important part of the work of the Poverty Alliance, allowing people with experience of poverty to feed directly into key policy consultations around the Fairer Scotland and contribute to the development of the Poverty Alliance.

We also carried out an extensive programme of community engagement work in Glasgow as part of our Welfare Trackers project, delivered in partnership with Scottish Drugs Forum and Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector.

BUILDING THE NETWORK

A key activity for the Poverty Alliance is building our network of supporters in the community, voluntary and statutory sectors. This includes providing regular information to our members, but it also entails having an active management board drawn from our membership, and being involved in the boards of other key organisations in the voluntary sector.

A critical part of our activity is our programme of 10 regional networking meetings which are designed to bring together people and organisations to update them on key poverty issues and to provide opportunities to work together at the local and national levels. A key event in building our network is our annual conference, which last year we combined with the 6th Scottish Assembly for Tackling Poverty, with more than 130 people attending.

In 2015-16 we also continued to carry out a range of other networking activities, including remaining active in the European Anti-Poverty Network and running a series of networking meeting for groups and organisations involved in issues around food insecurity.
RAISING AWARENESS OF POVERTY

Our awareness raising activity remains crucial to all of the work that the Poverty Alliance carries out. As in previous years we continued to produce a range of publications including briefing papers on a wide range of issues such as taxation, welfare reform, and the impact of welfare change on voluntary organisations. We also continued to produce our regular Scottish Anti-Poverty Review.

We have also continued to undertake a wide range of media work, with more than 160 comments in the local and national media last year. We have also continued to develop and maintain a strong online presence, running five websites, four twitter accounts and three facebook pages. We also ensure that we maintain an active engagement with a wide range of organisations by speaking at conferences and events, speaking at 70 events reaching more than 3,400 people.

Our campaigning work remains an important way of raising awareness about different aspects of poverty. We have continued to coordinate the Scottish Living Wage Campaign and the Stick Your Labels campaign, and have been actively involved in the Scottish Campaign on Welfare Reform and the End Child Poverty Campaign Scotland. We also organised Challenge Poverty Week in October 2015 to help raise awareness of the activities that are taking place across Scotland to address poverty.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

As can be seen from the summary above the Poverty Alliance carries out a very wide range of activities. All of these activities are designed to help contribute to our overall objective of influencing policy and practice to reduce poverty. Some of the key highlights over the last year have included:

1. Influencing policy and practice: We argued that the Community Empowerment Bill should be strengthened to include a right to appeal when their request to participate was turned down by a public body. By campaigning jointly with Oxfam Scotland and Barnardo’s, we were able to support efforts to amend legislation to this effect.

We have been very active around a wide variety of issues related to the use of new social security powers, including the development of new regulations for the Scottish Welfare Fund, and seeking to influence how the new powers are used. We have led calls for the welfare system in Scotland to be based on dignity and respect, which many others in the voluntary sector have supported. We believed that the Scottish Government’s statements on these issues were a result of our consistent campaigning.

We have continued to have an impact on the practices of employers across Scotland. By March 2016 more than 500 employers had signed up to the Living Wage Accreditation scheme, with more than 7,000 workers receiving a pay increase as a direct result. Finally, our research with young people in Glasgow into housing needs has begun to have an impact on the practices of the Wheatley Group. New training and support practices are now being introduced as a result of the award winning research we carried out with Children in Scotland.

2. Community Engagement: Our community engagement work continues to develop and reach more individuals and organisations than ever. We held 38 detailed community engagement meetings last year, leading to the production of a comprehensive report. We also carried out more than 100 training and networking events in Glasgow as part of our Welfare Trackers project, helping to build the capacity of local organisations to understand and prepare for on-going changes in the welfare system.

We carried out a comprehensive programme of community engagement for the Fairer Scotland discussion, working with 20 community organisations to help feed their views into this important discussion.

We also published the results of various community focused and participatory research projects. In addition to our award winning research with young people, we also published research from our Welfare Trackers programme. In addition to our community focused research we have also published research on employer attitudes to poverty and food insecurity. The continued development of the Poverty Alliance’s programme of research has been an important development over recent years and is now bearing fruit.
3. Networking: We have engaged with thousands of people through a range of networking activities during the last year. More than 3,400 people have been present at events where Poverty Alliance staff made an input.

“We have engaged with thousands of people through a range of networking activities”

We have also delivered more of our own events than ever before. This has included our 10 regional networking events, three Understanding Poverty Seminars, the Scottish Assembly for Tackling Poverty, our new Challenge Poverty Annual Lecture, four regional Food Poverty networking meetings, a national conference on food insecurity, a Living Wage Expo (the first of its kind in the UK), along with events at party political conferences, a parliamentary reception and four awareness raising sessions on stigma. These events are essential to maintain our engagement with our members and with all those who want to be active in tackling poverty.

“In 2015-16 we have had more media contacts than in any other year.”

4. Awareness raising: In 2015-16 we have had more media contacts than in any other year. Improving our media profile has been important in ensuring that the positions that the Poverty Alliance has are widely understood. We have also continued to increase our online activities, maintaining regular e-newsletters on our core activities and on the work of the Scottish Living Wage Accreditation Initiative. We have increased the reach of these newsletters to more than 2,500 subscribers.

Our Stick Your Labels campaign has seen significant progress over the last year. We launched a new phase of the campaign in May 2015, focusing on getting organisations to take practical actions to address stigma. Since the re-launch eight Local Authorities have signed up to the campaign alongside Health Scotland and the Scottish Government, with real commitments starting to be made by all of these bodies. In addition, the leaders of the five main political parties in Scotland signed up to the Stick Your Labels Campaign in March 2016, a significant step forward for the campaign.
TREASURER’S REPORT

The year to March 2016 was one that had a degree of financial stability for the Poverty Alliance. Over the course of the year, the Board and the staff team have been working hard to ensure that the organisation is able to carry out its work effectively at this important time. Our core grant from the Scottish Government has remained stable and has been supplemented by additional monies to support the expansion of the Scottish Living Wage Accreditation Initiative.

As can be seen from the table, we have maintained a range of funders over the last year. However, there will be a need in future years to build on much of the work we have been carrying out to identify new sources of funding. Key activities around social security, networking, attitudes to poverty and our work with employers all need new resources to help them grow. In increasingly difficult financial times, there is no doubting the challenges that lie ahead, but we remain positive about the opportunities to strengthen the financial base of the organisation.

At the same time as taking a range of positive steps to generate new sources of income, the Board of the Poverty Alliance recognises that difficult decisions may have to be taken to ensure that the Alliance remains a financially viable organisation. The Board will work with our staff team, our members and our existing and future funders to ensure that the Poverty Alliance continues to be able to deliver on its core aims. As always, we thank all of our funders, including our members, for their support.

Nick Bailey
Treasurer

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<td>Net movements in funds</td>
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<td>Balance carried forward</td>
<td>270,751</td>
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STAFF AND BOARD, APRIL 2015 - MARCH 2016

BOARD MEMBER APRIL 2015 – MARCH 16
Suzi Macpherson, (Convenor) (co-opted)
Nick Bailey, (Treasurer) University of Glasgow (co-opted)
Elizabeth Gore, (Vice – Convenor) Energy Action Scotland
John Dickie, Child Poverty Action Group
Mary McLean, Western Isles Health Partnership
Dave Moxham, Scottish Trades Union Congress
David Liddell, Scottish Drugs Forum
Satwat Rehman, One Parent Families Scotland
Irena Paterson, Moray Disability Forum
Derek Holliday (co-opted)
Ann Mulgrew, Children Panel (appointed 23 October 2015)
Anela Anwar, Oxfam Scotland (appointed 26 February 2016)
Jill Wood, Engender (appointed 26 February 2016)
Claire Telfer, Save the Children (until 23 October 2015)
Murdo Mathison (until 23 October 2015)

STAFF TEAM APRIL 2015 – MARCH 2016
Peter Kelly, Director
Robin Tennant, Fieldwork Manager
Twimukye Mushaka, Fieldwork Development Officer
Lynn Law, Fieldwork Development Officer (p-t)
Carla McCormack, Policy and Parliamentary Officer
Sarah Wikorski, Campaigns & Policy Assistant (p-t) (until February 2016)
Fiona McHardy, Research and Policy Officer
Lisa Whittaker, Research Officer (p-t) (until June 2015)
Mary Anne MacLeod, Research Officer (Food Banks) (p-t)
Julie McGahan, Living Wage Programme Manager (Scotland)
David Faith, Living Wage Accreditation Officer
Jack Evans, Living Wage Accreditation Officer
Poe McHugh, Administrator
Patricia Di-Tommaso, Administrative Assistant
Judith Robertson, Administrative Assistant (p-t)