

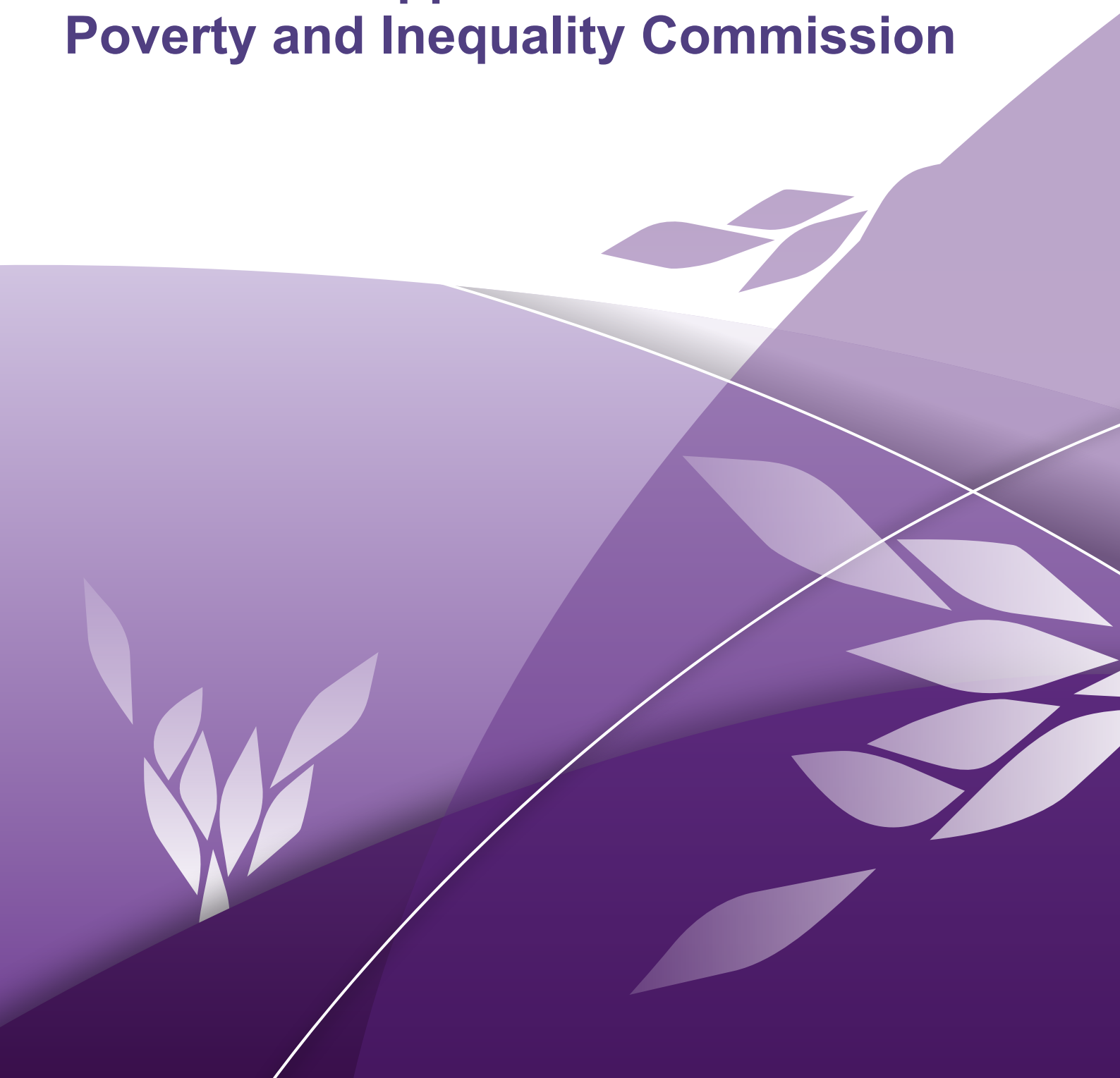


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Social Justice and Social Security Committee

Short-Term Appointments to the Poverty and Inequality Commission



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Social Justice and Social Security Committee

To consider and report on matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice excluding matters relating to housing and tenants' rights.



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Introduction

1. This report details the level of scrutiny the Social Justice and Social Security Committee chose to adopt for short-term appointments to the Poverty and Inequality Commission and the outcome of that scrutiny.

Background

2. The Poverty and Inequality Commission was established on 1 July 2019 under the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017. The Commission is an advisory non-departmental public body and provides independent advice and scrutiny to Scottish Ministers on poverty and inequality, with specific responsibilities in relation to child poverty.
3. The Act stipulates that there should be a Chair and between four and eight members appointed to the Commission and outlines the skills and experience desirable in the Commission. Specifically, it stipulates that Scottish Ministers must have regard to the desirability of:
 - (a) securing that the Commission (taken as a whole) has experience in and knowledge of—
 - (i) the formulation, implementation and evaluation of policy relating to poverty and inequality,
 - (ii) research in connection with poverty and inequality,
 - (iii) working with persons experiencing poverty or inequality (or both), and
 - (b) the Commission's membership including persons who have experienced poverty or inequality (or both).
4. The Commission previously consisted of a Chair and seven Commissioners, whose appointments were all due to end in 2024. The Scottish Government had therefore initiated a round of reappointments and new appointments which parliamentary approval is needed for.

Need for short-term appointments

5. During the reappointment process the Chair and three Commissioners, who were proposed for reappointment resigned from the Commission. Relevant correspondence is detailed in Annexe A. The Cabinet Secretary wrote to the Committee on 14 September to explain that due to the resignations, the Commission would no longer be quorate by 11 November unless action was taken.
6. The Cabinet Secretary also advised she intended to write to the Ethical Standards Commissioner to seek approval from the Ethical Standards Commissioner to make interim appointments to ensure the effective operation of the Commission until new Commissioners can be put in place.
7. In her letter of 3 October the Cabinet Secretary said the Ethical Standards Commissioner confirmed on 28 September that, subject to Parliamentary approval, he is content for the Cabinet Secretary to appoint a Chair and up to two Commissioners on a short-term, emergency, basis without a fair and open recruitment process.
8. The Cabinet Secretary therefore set out a proposal to make short-term appointments to the Commission, to ensure it remains quorate up until the Scottish Government appoints a substantive Chair and up to eight Commissioners.
9. The Cabinet Secretary advised that Parliamentary approval is required by 10 November 2023, otherwise, the Commission will not be quorate and will be unable to fulfil its statutory duties.
10. The letter also provided details about the proposed short-term appointees' relevant experience for the posts. The appointees' biographies are set out in Annexe B. The Committee considered these at its meeting on [5 October 2023](#).

Decision

11. The Committee agreed the proposed appointees possess the knowledge and experience necessary for effective governance of the Commission, allowing it to fulfil its statutory duties and execute its work plan.

Recommendation

12. The Social Justice and Social Security Committee recommends that the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice's proposed short-term appointments to the Poverty and Inequality Commission be approved.

Annexe A: Correspondence

13. This annexe sets out in chronological order correspondence relating to the original round of new appointments, the resignations from the Commission, the new round of appointments and the need for short-term appointments.
14. At its meeting on [4 May 2023](#), the Committee agreed the level of scrutiny it wished to undertake in relation to the reappointments and appointments. This was communicated to Scottish Government officials to inform the next steps of the appointments process. The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice wrote to the Committee confirming the Scottish Government nominations for reappointment to the Commission and set out the timetable for the reappointments and appointments:
 - [Scrutiny of Poverty and Inequality Commission Reappointments](#)
15. On 6 July 2023, the Committee wrote to the Members of the Commission nominated by the Scottish Government for reappointment.
 - [Nominations for re-appointment of members to the Poverty and Inequality Commission \(Bill Scott\)](#)
 - [Nominations for re-appointment of members to the Poverty and Inequality Commission \(Lindsay Graham\)](#)
 - [Nominations for re-appointment of members to the Poverty and Inequality Commission \(Linda Bamford\)](#)
 - [Nominations for re-appointment of members to the Poverty and Inequality Commission \(Shona Stephen\)](#)
16. On 11 August, the Committee received notification from the Cabinet Secretary that the Commissioners and the Chair had resigned.
 - [Poverty Inequality Commission Resignations Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice 11 August 2023](#)
17. On 21 August the Committee received letters dated 18 August from each of the Commissioners informing the Committee of their resignations.
 - [Poverty Inequality Commission Resignations Shona Stephen 18 August 2023](#)
 - [Poverty Inequality Commission Resignations Linda Bamford 18 August 2023](#)
 - [Poverty Inequality Commission Resignations Lindsay Graham 18 August 2023](#)
18. On 25 August the Cabinet Secretary wrote to the Committee attaching copies of the Scottish Government's correspondence with the Chair and Commissioners.
 - [Poverty Inequality Commission Resignations Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice 25 August 2023](#)
 - [Poverty Inequality Commission Resignations Cabinet Secretary for Social](#)

[Justice to Bill Scott, 16 August 2023](#)

- [Poverty Inequality Commission Resignations Linda Bamford 16 August 2023](#)
 - [Poverty Inequality Commission Resignations Shona Stephen 16 August 2023](#)
 - [Poverty Inequality Commission Resignations Lindsay Graham 16 August 2023](#)
 - [Poverty Inequality Commission Resignations Linda Bamford 22 August 2023](#)
 - [Poverty Inequality Commission Resignations Shona Stephen 22 August 2023](#)
 - [Poverty Inequality Commission Resignations Lindsay Graham 22 August 2023](#)
19. On 14 September the Cabinet Secretary wrote to the Committee requesting it to advise on the level of scrutiny it wished to adopt for the new round of public appointments, specifically referencing the appointment plan. The Cabinet Secretary also set out that due to the resignations, the Commission would no longer be quorate by 11 November unless action was taken. She therefore advised she intended to write to the Ethical Standards Commissioner to seek approval of a code variation to urgently appoint a Chair and up to two Commissioners on a short-term basis.
- [Poverty and Inequality Commission Public Appointments, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice](#)
20. The Committee replied to the 14 September letter the same day, acknowledging the Cabinet Secretary's request. The letter also sought more information on the Sponsor Team and its interactions with the Commissioners and asked whether any issues had arisen that required to be addressed in relation to the 2020 [Framework Document between the Scottish Government and the Poverty and Inequality Commission](#).
- [Poverty Inequality Commission Reappointment of Members](#)
21. On 20 September, the Cabinet Secretary wrote to the Committee following the request for information about the Sponsor Team.
- [Poverty and Inequality Commission – Re-Appointment of Commissioners](#)
22. On 27 September, the Cabinet Secretary wrote to the Committee with an addendum to the letter of 20 September.
- [Poverty and Inequality Commission – Re-Appointment of Commissioners, addendum](#)
23. Also on 27 September, the Committee wrote to the Cabinet Secretary, acknowledging the letter of 20 September and setting out the level of scrutiny it had

agreed to adopt for the new round of public appointments.

- [Poverty and Inequality Commission Appointment of Members](#)

24. On 3 October, the Cabinet Secretary wrote to the Committee seeking its views on the level of scrutiny the Committee wished to adopt for the short-term appointments to the Poverty and Inequality Commission specifically.

- [Poverty and Inequality Commission, Short-term appointments](#)

Annexe B: Biographies

25. **Proposed Short-term Chair, Professor Stephen Sinclair:**

A Professor of Social Policy and a researcher in the Yunus Centre for Social Business and Health at Glasgow Caledonian University. His principal research interests are in poverty, welfare reform and social innovation. He is co-Director of the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit, and Glasgow School for Business and Society Theme Leader for Social Innovation research. He is also Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and a member of the Child Poverty Action Group's UK Policy Committee and its Scottish Advisory Body since 2015. He is a long-standing member of the Poverty Alliance with whom he has collaborated on several research projects including the 'Stick Your Labels' campaign which helped promote a more positive discussion around poverty in Scotland. Stephen is former civil servant and familiar with the needs of policy makers and the urgent demands and political considerations under which they often operate and recognises the importance of working effectively with policy makers to provide timely, practical and clear analyses of evidence. Stephen is a recognised authority on social innovation, as shown by being commissioned to edit the forthcoming *International Handbook on Social Policy and Social Innovation*. His work on both Social Impact Bonds and financial exclusion are internationally esteemed and highly cited. Stephen is the Chair of the Editorial Board for the *Journal of Poverty & Social Justice*, an elected member of the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Social Policy*, a former member of Executive Committee of the Social Policy Association, a member of the Economic and Social Research Council's Peer Review College, and a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. He is a Visiting Professor at the University of Parma and an international expert fellow at the Polish National Science Centre. Stephen has expressed an interest in applying to become a substantive Commissioner through the forthcoming new public appointments recruitment round.

26. **Proposed Short-term Commissioner, Tressa Burke:**

Tressa Burke was a founder member of Glasgow Disability Alliance (GDA) in 2001, and five years later, was appointed CEO. She has taken the organisation from strength to strength over the past two decades. She is a member of the First Minister's National Advisory Council for Women and Girls, the Minimum Income Guarantee Expert Group and the Social Isolation and Loneliness Advisory Group. Until recently she was Depute Convenor of the Disability and Carers' Benefits Expert Advisory Group & is Co-Chair of Glasgow City's Disability Workstream. She has an MA (Hons) in Music and Philosophy and a Masters in Social Work from the University of Glasgow, specialising in community development. She was awarded an honorary doctorate from the Open University in June 2022 in recognition of her commitment to Public Services including her exceptional contribution as a campaigner for equality and human rights and her tireless efforts to improve the lives of thousands of disabled people.

27. **Proposed Short-term Commissioner, Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick:**

Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick is the Director of the Institute for Social Policy, Housing, Equalities Research (I-SPHERE) at Heriot Watt University. She is a leading international scholar on homelessness. She was principal investigator on

the highly respected Crisis-funded “Homelessness Monitor” series for over a decade and leads a major programme of work on “Destitution in the UK” for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. She co-led the influential ‘Hard Edges Scotland’ report on severe and multiple disadvantage for the Lankelly-Chase Foundation/Robertson Trust. She was homelessness theme lead in the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)/JRF-funded ‘UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence’, and previously led/co-led the housing and homelessness strands in a five-year ESRC funded study of “Welfare Conditionality”, as well as an earlier ESRC-funded project on “Multiple Exclusion Homelessness”. Suzanne is currently managing a multi-year research and capacity-building programme on “Homelessness and Black and Minoritised Communities in the UK” and played a significant role in the recent evaluation of the “Social Innovation Partnership” for the Scottish Government/Hunter Foundation. She was lead researcher on a recent international evaluation of an “A Place to Call Home’ initiative to end street homelessness in 13 cities ranged across all six continents for the Chicago-based Institute of Global Homelessness and funded by the Oak Foundation. Suzanne has expressed an interest in applying to become a substantive Commissioner through the forthcoming new public appointments recruitment.

