

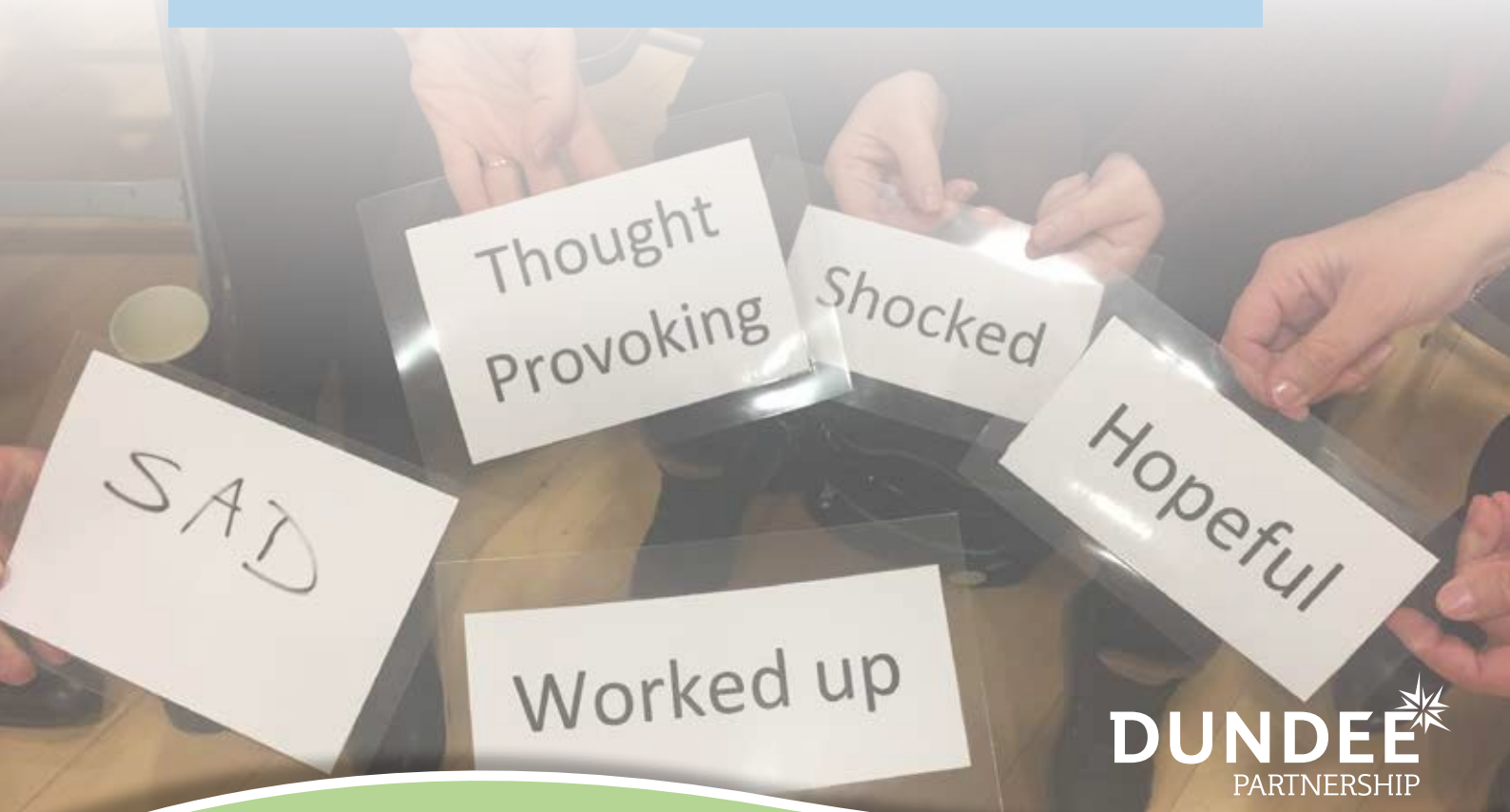


DUNDEE

FIGHTING

FAIRNESS

for



DUNDEE
PARTNERSHIP

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Foreword

From the outset, the Fairness Commission has received unanimous support from across the council. The reason; because we all understand the value in listening to first hand experiences, of challenging the status quo and of adapting to protect and support our fellow Dundonians.



When I became leader of Dundee City Council in May 2017, tackling poverty and related issues was top of my agenda and that is why, without hesitation, I volunteered to sit on the Dundee Fairness Commission. Tackling poverty must remain at the heart of everything we do.

Dundee has changed significantly for the better in my lifetime but particularly in the last decade. There is no denying that the city is on an upward trajectory, and with it, a hope of creating many hundreds of jobs and in raising the living standards of every single person who lives here. But, we must also be realistic and honest about the challenges we face and use them as our motivation for change, for the creation of a more prosperous Dundee in which everyone has the help and support they need. At the same time as the city tries to change its fortunes, ill-thought out policies born in ostentatious surroundings and disconnected from the realities many find themselves in, are creating real and lasting hardship. Deep cuts to the welfare support system have resulted in thousands more visits to foodbanks, applications to hardship funds and people finding themselves teetering over a financial cliff.

I know that too many people in Dundee are struggling and we should, and must, do more to help.

To do that, we have to be able to truly understand what it feels like to be fighting against poverty day after day. And the only way of doing that is to listen to the stories, views and ideas of the people experiencing it firsthand. That's why it has been such a privilege to work alongside members of the Commission - which we have called Dundee Fighting for Fairness. Our discussions and investigations over the last year has helped me to understand what life is like for Dundonians trying to get out from under debt, searching for work that earns a decent wage or sliding towards a physical or mental health crisis and the hardship that can follow. Our recommendations are about trying to change the way we help people and to work towards a time when we don't need to worry that families and children in Dundee are doing without.

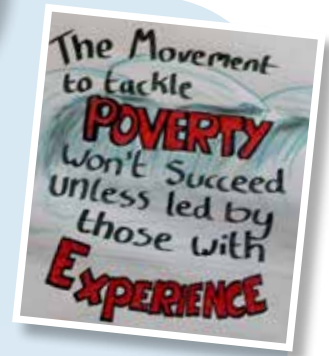
I know that being part of the Fairness Commission has been incredibly valuable for everyone who has participated and, like me, I know every member will be doing everything in their power to put these recommendations into practice.

I'm confident that this is a conversation that will continue and I'm already looking forward to taking part in it.

- John Alexander

Chair of the Dundee Partnership & Leader of Administration, Dundee City Council

Summary of Recommendations



People and Money

Public bodies and social landlords in Dundee

Adopt more effective and supportive ways of communicating with clients/tenants about money matters and debt

The Dundee Partnership

Creates a single access point for all the financial advice services in the city, including Council and voluntary services that will:

- jointly promote financial advice services with a single logo, slogan and phone number
- produce new information leaflets, posters and materials with the support of people with experience of services

Makes a case to participate in the introduction of the Citizen's Basic Income Scheme for Scotland

Mental Health

The Dundee Health and Social Care Partnership

Develops a 24/7 drop-in (self-referral) service in collaboration with beneficiaries and offering clinical, non-clinical, therapeutic and peer support.

The Dundee Drug Commission and the Dundee Alcohol & Drug Partnership

Utilise the Fairness Commission's mental health research findings to ensure that people with substance misuse issues are offered and can access appropriate mental health support.

The Dundee Partnership

Provides training for service providers and frontline staff (including GP surgeries) to:

- raise awareness of the impact of poverty on mental health
- improve interactions with service users
- support prevention and early intervention
- increase referrals/ signposting to non-clinical mental health support.

Disseminates the Fairness Commission's mental health research findings to all relevant partners, strategic planners and commissioners and holds them accountable for implementing the associated recommendations.

Stigma

The Dundee Partnership

Launches a public campaign for a #FairerDundee

Prepares a series of new, positive anti-poverty messages & non-stigmatising stories for #FairerDundee

Develops joint campaigns with the local media to challenge and change public perceptions

Produces guidance and materials to enable all service providers to attract, recruit, train and support staff with the right values and attitudes towards people who are experiencing poverty or who are in recovery

Does more research to understand the stigma and challenges experienced by people struggling against in-work poverty



Timeline of the Commission

In June 2017 we met for the first time, the new Commission - **Dundee Fighting for Fairness** - 12 people with personal experience of poverty and inequality and 12 people with influence in our city, Community and Civic Commissioners working together as equals.

Our desire was to search out the issues people are struggling with today, to hear their stories and find ways to make a difference.

What makes this different to other Commissions or meetings?

June - Nov 2017: There was no agenda, paperwork or action points. We spent this time listening together to the stories and experiences of the Community Commissioners. After each story-sharing we discussed and drew out key themes, finding the common threads. After telling his story, one of the Commissioners said: *“I felt really proud of myself. I felt like I’d really achieved something. One of the Civic Commissioners came up to me afterwards, he was quite choked up and that really moved me that someone cared so much. I feel fortunate that someone like that, from a totally different walk of life, is so open, friendly and non-judgemental.”*



Nov/Dec 2017: Civic Commissioners shared their thoughts, highlighting where the themes and stories connected with their personal and working lives. Together we chose 3 key themes: Money, Mental Health and Stigma and broke into working groups.

Jan - Sept 2018: We worked in our themed groups:

- gathering more information and evidence
- identifying and exploring solutions with people from local communities and key agencies
- sharing our learning with others and finalising our recommendations.

“The process has been different to what I expected but it’s much more rewarding and as a result the outcomes have been more powerful. My thinking has changed; I’m looking forward to putting some of those ideas into action in my own organisation and trying to influence others to engage differently as well” – Gordon



.....

The key is the collaborative process. This is about the real experts in the room, the Community Commissioners representing local communities, being in a position to influence change through their experiences and ideas.

This is about seeing each other, hearing each other and speaking out together.

“I was really delighted to be asked to be a part of the Commission but didn’t quite know what to expect. It has struck me how passionate and proud people in Dundee are, but sometimes the systems that are put in place and intended to help can have an adverse effect. Working together and really understanding that “one size doesn’t fit all”, can make maybe just small, but positive impact on people’s lives. This is the start of change...” – Fiona

Reflections of civic and community commissioners:

The commissioners, who worked together sharing stories, exploring issues and developing solutions are:

Adele Dick
Andrew Lorimer
Angela Vettraino
Anthony Gibson
Blair Thomson
Carlo Morelli
Donna Colligan
Elaine Zwirlein

Ethel Davidson
Fiona Morrison
Gavin Jenkins
George Meechan (Dode)
Greg Colgan
Gordon McDougall
John Alexander
Lucinda Godfrey

Marc Nelson
Mark Fisher
Michael Marra
Roger Keech
Sheila Allan
Sonja Cairnie
Suzanne Sime

I've totally grown in confidence. I used to think 'Oh, I can't say that, that's really stupid!' But now I feel like I can share my thoughts and speak up.

The Commission is a place I can express myself and feel useful.

I've grown in confidence through this process. If we can get one thing changed, it'll make a difference.

I've been hugely impressed by what I've seen, learned and heard from the other Commissioners.



"The stories I heard about the experiences individuals have had and are still having really shocked me. It was important to hear them and it was really powerful that we were all united together in our desire to deliver real change. Sometimes as officers we try to fix things. The Commission taught me that the best solutions come from honest conversations based on mutual trust and understanding and that no one person can have all the answers" – Elaine

"It's been a great experience and a challenging one at times. For me it's always been about the hope that change can happen in Dundee. It's been so nice to work with so many people who had all the same intentions. I believe that a few will be friends for life!" – Sonja

"Being part of the Fairness Commission has been a great privilege. Hearing people's stories was simultaneously deeply moving, infuriating and inspiring, and I was deeply affected and galvanised into action by listening to commissioners' experiences. The actions we have recommended are ones that we believe will make real difference to people in our city, because they are directly informed and shaped by those experiencing the effects of inequality" – Angela

People and Money

When we heard people's stories we all wished that we could just wave a magic wand and give everyone in Dundee enough money to have a better quality of life. Recognising we don't have the power to do that, we knuckled down and started having some really hard conversations about what would *actually* help people.

We conducted a survey monkey of 47 people; met with the Financial Inclusion Strategy Group; had conversations with the Senior Manager of Council Advice Services and the Financial Inclusion Development Officer for Dundee City Council. We conducted 1 focus group and drew information from focus groups run by other Commissioners. We also met with researchers from ScotPHO to discuss the benefits of Citizens Basic Income.

Out of these conversations, we met with the Director of Housing for Hillcrest Housing Association and worked together to change their rent arrears communication – text, email and letters; our feedback was incorporated into the job descriptions and person specifications of the new Scottish Social Security Agency, so that they were more likely to attract people who would show empathy and respect; and one of our Commissioners challenged the Scottish Welfare Fund about their text responses to applications, leading to a review and change in content.

What did we hear?

#1 Organisations do not understand how their communication around financial issues negatively impacts their clients.

When you get a letter that says "YOU HAVE 7 DAYS TO PAY THIS..." it makes you angry and feel hopeless.

Why are they (arrears letters) so patronising, unhelpful and unfriendly? Don't they realise that most likely someone is struggling at the other side of these letters?!

Example of POOR communication

Your payment is now overdue. Please make a payment immediately or phone ***** to discuss your account.

Example of GOOD communication

Your account is in arrears - talk to us, we're here to help. our number is *****. If you are experiencing any financial difficulties, our _____ Service can provide support to help you. Alternatively, you may wish to contact _____ or _____.

What did people say would help?

Why not use phrases like 'We offer support at... If you're having trouble...' – There's no offer of support in these texts.

Ya a 'right?' Open the letter like this – People are more likely to respond to a kind and caring letter that asks if they are alright and would they like some help rather than this!

RECOMMENDATION: Public bodies and social landlords in Dundee adopt more effective and supportive ways of communicating with clients/tenants about money matters and debt.

This would help. Services should be more empathetic.

People and Money

What did we hear?

#2 There is a lack of community awareness of financial services available in Dundee. When people are in need of help, there is an oversaturation of flyers, phone numbers, acronyms, pamphlets, websites, etc., and people feel overwhelmed and unaware of where to start.



When I lost my job, I didn't have any idea that these services existed. I may not have had a breakdown or got so far in debt if I knew places like these existed.

We don't need more leaflets or flyers, when you're in crisis or stressed they don't do any good. They should be training people up to be 'experts' in different fields so they can signpost people to the correct service.

What did people say would help?

There should be one logo and one slogan for ALL money advice services. Something like - "Are ya pure skint, pal? - Need help with benefits? Know your rights?"

The Dundee JobCentre and other Frontline services in Dundee should work together. Like training the Job Coaches/frontline staff on all the financial services available in Dundee so they can discuss them with their clients and not just hand them a flyer.

RECOMMENDATION: Dundee Partnership Creates a single access point for all the financial advice services in the city, including Council and voluntary services that will:

- jointly promote financial advice services with a single logo, slogan and phone number
- produce new information leaflets, posters and materials with the support of people with experience of services

This addresses an issue in Dundee. This would improve services as they would know what each other are doing?

People and Money

What did we hear?

#3 People are struggling with low incomes, confusion and stigmatisation while receiving Benefits.

At times I felt humiliated despite wanting to work but not finding anything. There seemed to be a judgement and no sympathy or understanding respect.

It's inhumane. They're telling terminally ill people, like me, that we can work even though I can barely clean my house or walk to the store. And it's because I LOOK fine that they think I'm a scrounger.

What did people say would help?

Citizens Basic Income could actually create more working people, people would feel less pressure to work full time, and free up working hours for others.

CBI could give my children the leg up I never had, as they will have an income to start with.

RECOMMENDATION: Dundee Partnership makes a case to participate in the introduction of the Citizen's Basic Income Scheme for Scotland.

In **Dundee**, the introduction of an illustrative Citizen's Basic Income scheme was estimated to result in.....



Source: ScotPHO Triple I Income Interventions Tool (2018)

In **Dundee**, the introduction of an illustrative Citizen's Basic Income Plus scheme with additional payment for disabled people was estimated to result in.....



Source: ScotPHO Triple I Income Interventions Tool (2018)

Mental Health

It was clear from early in the Commission process that access to mental health services and support was challenging for many. We decided, as a group, that we wanted to hear more about other people's experiences and in particular those who would not normally have a voice, people not accessing support and people struggling with poverty.

We designed a questionnaire, asking about people's access to and experience of mental health services. With support from many partner agencies we were able to conduct 122 questionnaires WITH people; 8 focus groups (42 people) and a survey monkey which received 90 responses. This was analysed and gave us a strong basis for our recommendations. Many people trusted us with their stories, so we have created a separate in-depth report, sharing their experiences and their ideas for change, which we've already presented to:

- The Health and Social Care Partnership Mental Health Strategic Planning Group
- The Dundee Drugs Commission
- The Tayside Independent Inquiry Team
- We plan to produce a summary report, to be launched in January 2019.

What did we hear?

#1 People reach crisis point outside "normal working hours" and cannot self-refer for support when they need it most

NHS 24 are not equipped to deal with calls on mental health, they always ask the same questions about physical things. This causes severe frustration and there is not much they can offer at times of crisis. If out of hours, or weekends, horrendous trying to get help.

The waiting lists are absurdly long. Approx. 8-10 weeks just to get an initial assessment and then about 6-8 weeks for your next appointment.

What did people say would help?

More additional therapies, like art therapy. This gives people confidence and helps them feel less alone.

A facility that allows people to self-refer and access advice/support at the time of need with the option of referrals for further, possibly more longer term support if required.

RECOMMENDATION: The Dundee Health and Social Care Partnership develops a 24/7 drop-in (self-referral) service in collaboration with beneficiaries and offering clinical, non-clinical, therapeutic and peer support.

The barriers would be funding, policy, etc, but this needs to be said! It's what people need.

Mental Health

What did we hear?

#2 There's a lack of consistency in mental health provision in GP surgeries; people are not aware of all mental health services and support available; services do not take into account the impact of poverty on mental health.



Some GP's are good, empathic. Some are not, and are very unsupportive.

I need to take food with my medication. But on regular occurrences I am without food due to financial difficulties, this makes my bad situation worse.

What did people say would help?

Every GP practice should have a mental health specialist.

A special phone number for the GP surgery that is only used when you're struggling with your mental health and you want to make a GP appointment.

GP - give some leaflets, be proactive in giving out information. For example; support groups and community activities which would help mental health.

RECOMMENDATION: The Dundee Partnership provides training for service providers and frontline staff (including GP surgeries) to: raise awareness of the impact of poverty on mental health; improve interactions with service users; support prevention and early intervention; increase referrals/ signposting to non-clinical mental health support.

RECOMMENDATION: The Dundee Partnership disseminates the Fairness Commission's mental health research findings to all relevant partners, strategic planners and commissioners and holds them accountable for implementing the associated recommendations.

If this is listened to, it could make a huge difference.

Mental Health

What did we hear?

#3 Substance misuse is a barrier to accessing mental health support

To not be treated like someone on methadone! They think you're there for tablets only and when you tell them anything about your mental health it's always 'we'll see you next time'.

I know through personal experience doctors concentrate on the substance (it could be even methadone). They always take it for granted that it's the methadone (if stopped) would suddenly make you better mentally.

What did people say would help?

Not to be judged straight away when I tell them I'm on methadone.

People seeing past the substance misuse and seeing the mental health, Mental Health is often overlooked when substances are involved.



RECOMMENDATION: The Dundee Drug Commission and the Dundee Alcohol & Drug Partnership utilise the Fairness Commission's mental health research findings to ensure that people with substance misuse issues are offered and can access appropriate mental health support.

Need to show people that things are NOT OKAY and we have noticed. It's essential that something is done!

Stigma

Why are we being punished for being in need?! We're not just scroungers, no one chooses to live like this! I never WANTED to lose my job and go on benefits and scrape to get by. Who would?!

Stigma is complex and is felt by different people in different ways, and doesn't have clear or easy solutions. So we did some research with service users and we decided to look into how to change the way people in poverty in Dundee are judged and treated by the public and services.

Members of our group: -

- Attended Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) conference where they launched and discussed findings from their 'How to Talk about Poverty in the UK' report, which showed how to communicate more effectively about poverty
- Met with the Service Manager, Communications, from Dundee City Council, to develop ideas on how to communicate better about poverty and implement the JRF recommendations
- Met with Senior Features Writer and the Editors of the Evening Telegraph and the Courier from DC Thompson, to discuss our ideas about positive messages and how local papers could help
- Surveyed people who use local services to understand their experiences
- Visited the Recovery-Friendly Lochee initiative, where the local community and businesses sign up to provide an open and supportive environment for those recovering from substance misuse
- Sampled the poverty-sensitive training sessions, which have been delivered to many services and organisations in the city
- Organised focus group with people who deliver services from Skills Development Scotland, Hillcrest Housing and Dundee City Council, to gain their perspectives on how it is to deliver their services and to understand any barriers they face in delivering a person-centred approach.

What did we hear?

#1 The public has negative attitudes about people in poverty

Living in poverty can make you feel like a second class citizen. You hear people talking about benefit cheats and scroungers, if you're in difficult circumstances people assume it's because of something you've done or because you're lazy.

I think the public's attitude to people in poverty or suffering inequalities is 'if it's not my problem then why should I care?'. Then on the other hand, you do meet people who would help and care.

What did people say would help?

People need to treat others as they would want themselves or their loved ones treated.

Letting people know it's ok to talk about things that aren't going well in your life.

Stigma



RECOMMENDATION: The Dundee Partnership launches a public campaign for a #FairerDundee

What did we hear?

#2 Media stories usually show people in poverty in a negative light

It feels like the only way the media knows how to portray people living in poverty is through fear. Ordinary people who are struggling financially are made out to be criminals, cheats and liars living in circumstances of their own making. There's seldom mention of people dying while they wait for an application to be processed or the fear and anxiety people feel every day about whether they can put the heating on or feed the kids.

What did people say would help?

It's always sad stories about poverty. They never follow stories up to see if the people in the stories got the help they needed or if they finally got sorted with their benefits.

RECOMMENDATION: The Dundee Partnership prepares a series of new, positive anti-poverty messages & non-stigmatising stories for #FairerDundee

RECOMMENDATION: The Dundee Partnership develops joint campaigns with the local media to challenge and change public perceptions.

What did we hear?

#3 Services don't always treat people in poverty with the respect

I get treated like a scrounger for asking for help.

At times I felt humiliated despite wanting to work but not finding anything. There seemed to be a judgement and no sympathy or understanding respect.

I felt like giving up on some services and stopped me going for help when I really needed it.

Thoughts from the frontline staff:

- It's easier to empathise when you know why people are angry and know it's not personal towards you.
- You can become hardened when people speak of suicide because you hear it so often and the only thing you can do is phone the police.
- We're lucky. We're able to take space and time so we can sort ourselves out so that we are able to deal with the next customer well.

Stigma

What did people say would help?

Made me feel happy to have received a good and fair service.

Staff and professionals need to see people as people and not as poor, drug users that are a threat or lazy and not to use lazy incorrect stereotypes when dealing with people. Staff need to treat people with fairness, dignity and respect.

Thoughts from the frontline staff:

- Things need to be in people's local communities – makes it more accessible and less intimidating
- There needs to be more support for frontline staff especially when they've dealt with a crisis or someone who's aggressive
- Making sure front line staff are trained properly so they don't have to make things up and feel overwhelmed

RECOMMENDATION: The Dundee Partnership produces guidance and materials to enable all service providers to attract, recruit, train and support staff with the right values and attitudes towards people who are experiencing poverty or who are in recovery

What did we hear?

#4 We need to know more about in-work poverty

I feel embarrassed for not being in permanent employment. I would feel bad if I knew that I meant less to someone because of my inability to be in long term employment.

Appointments are always during working hours and I don't feel I can ask my boss for time off to attend.

What did people say would help?

Services need to be available outside of the working week, a lot of people can't sacrifice income for the sake of their health.

I work in the third sector who seem to have a better understanding of the difficulties in life.

Our HR and occupational health are good at supporting staff and contact services on our behalf.

RECOMMENDATION: The Dundee Partnership does more research to understand the stigma and challenges experienced by people struggling against in-work poverty.

What Happens Next?

We want to spread the word far and wide about our work and our recommendations. We also want partners and organisations in Dundee to commit themselves to creating a fairer Dundee. Here's how we'll be taking our message out to the people of Dundee and beyond.

Members of the commission are scheduled to-

- Launch this report at a conference in the Steeple Church on 29 November 2018. Our principal speaker will be **Professor John McKendrick** co-director of the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit Glasgow Caledonian University.
- Present our recommendations to **Dundee Partnership Management Group** on 6 December 2018. The Partnership has overall responsibility for reducing poverty and inequality in Dundee along with improving the social and economic life of the city.
- Present our recommendations to **Aileen Campbell, Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government** on 12 December 2018. The Scottish Government has supported the Commission financially and is particularly interested in what we discovered and how we worked together.
- Present our recommendations to the **Policy and Resources Committee of Dundee City Council** on 7 January. The council has a special relationship with the people of the city and will be at the heart of efforts to promote fairness in communities.

A **new Fairness Action Plan** for Dundee will be developed for the Partnership and the Council by March 2019. This will incorporate the Commission's recommendations and the many other fairness issues being addressed by partners and communities including food, fuel and funeral poverty. It will also have an in depth focus on child poverty and in-work poverty.

Discussions are already underway on how Dundee can carry on this important conversation in 2019 and 2020.



We want to thank a number of organisations and individuals for supporting our work throughout the Commission:

Scottish Government Social Justice Strategy Team
Hillcrest Housing Association
DC Thomson

Dundee City Council: the Financial Inclusion Strategy Group; the Senior Manager of Council Advice Services; the Senior Welfare Rights Officer and the Financial Inclusion Development Officer; Customer Services and Neighbourhood Services.

Community Health Inequality Team
ScotPHO Triple I
Oxfam Menu for Change
Skills Development Scotland

For allowing us to conduct questionnaires and focus groups: The Connect Team, The Community Health Teams, The Maxwell Centre, Haven, Volunteer Dundee, One Parent Families Scotland, The Wise Group, LGBT Youth Scotland, Hot Chocolate Trust Youth Project, Lochee Hub, The Adult Learning Team, Brooksbank, Amina Muslim Women's Centre, The Stay & Play Family Project, Home-Start Family Group, The Celebrate Age Network, Dundee Service Users Network, Allsorts LGBT Group, Fintry Church, Meadowside St Paul's Church Drop-in, Making Dundee Home Drop-in, The Bridge @ The Friary, Lifegate Church Café, Coldside Church Café, Eagles Wings Drop-in, Parish Nursing @ The Steeple, Lochee Church Support Work.

www.dundeefightingforfairness.co.uk

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