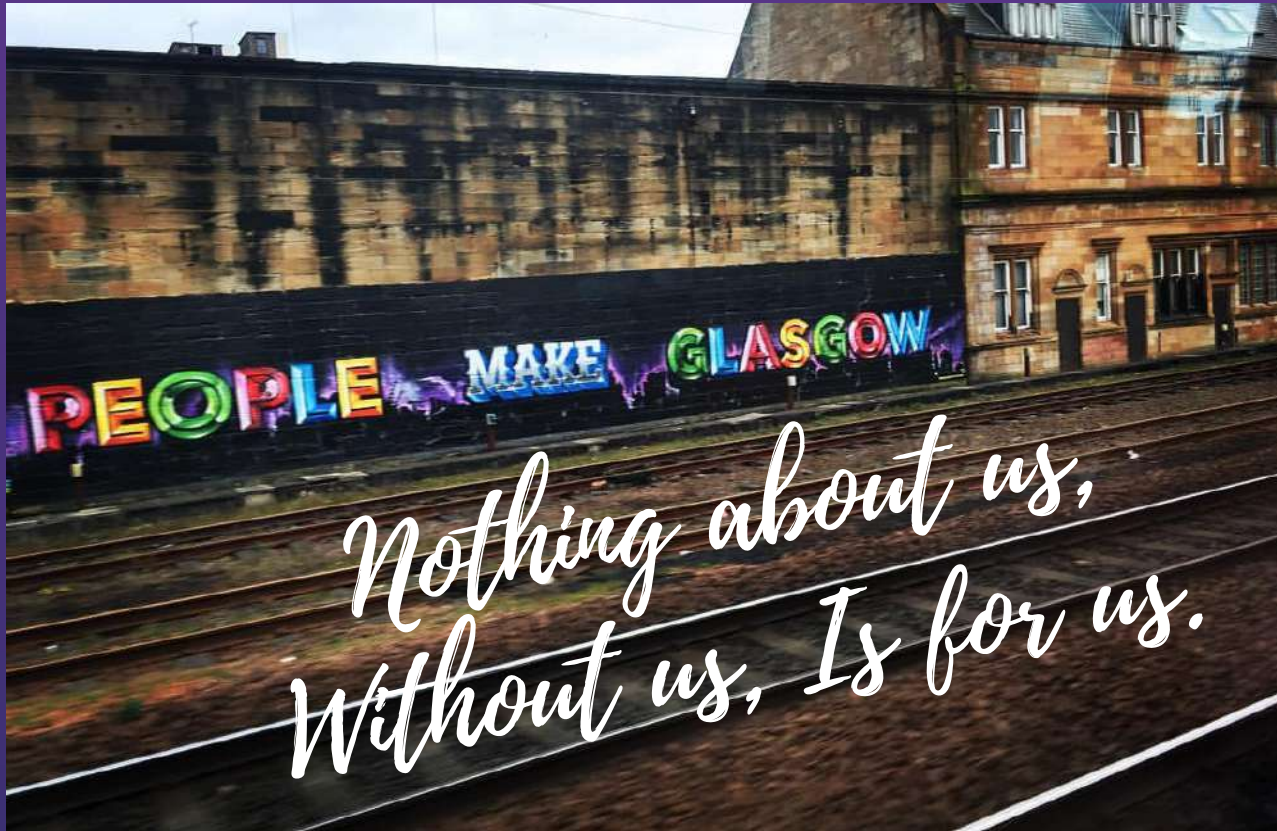


The Poverty Truth Commission



2017- 2018

A Movement for Change

"Change can be sudden, but it can also take time. We are about both."

"We meet with decision makers not because we are looking for pity, but because we are looking for answers."

The Poverty Truth Commission believes in change, justice and compassion. We see strength and potential in the midst of deprivation and know that we cannot understand or address poverty fully until those who live every day with its reality are at the heart of that process for change.

We come from all walks of life - people living with poverty and others within positions of influence in Scottish society, as equal Commissioners. We (the 4th round of the Commission) have met together over the last 18 months to listen deeply, ask questions of ourselves and those in power, and to explore the truth about poverty in Scotland today - building on the groundbreaking work of the previous Commissions.

This report details our learning and recommendations for change and invites you to respond.

We, along with previous Commissioners, have sat round tables of influence and brought wisdom and questions to the current debate. We are building a bold and inspirational movement for change together, because we know that **nothing about us, without us, is for us.**

A Voice, Not an Echo

We come with a wealth of experience and from many places. We are community activists, volunteers, parents, carers, seeking asylum, dealing with homelessness, working for the Scottish Government, for Education Scotland, Glasgow Life, housing associations, funding bodies, academia, the arts and the media.

Our work is built on relationships and the knowledge that we must ask questions of ourselves and the changes we can effect. We work together to create a safe, respectful, generous space. We listen to one another's stories and share our own. At times this is painful; it can be humbling and difficult to hold.

But there is love and laughter and joy in the room even when we talk about hard things. Stories of hope prove inspirational and create change. There is power in the circle in which we sit.

We listen and collaborate thoughtfully. Moving from listening to action, we talk to government, the media, and others who can make changes. We speak up and we do so together. The Poverty Truth Commission is a voice, not an echo.

"Coming out of homelessness is like trying to climb Ben Nevis in your flipflops."

"I was just about surviving. Just about keeping my head above water. And then the washing machine broke..."

A Determination to Challenge

"I feel a bit taller,
just being able to call
myself a
Poverty Truth
Commissioner."

"We want to tell
stories that come
from us. Not just
what others ask us
to speak about."

We heard about the constraints of the homeless hostel system; the scarcity of nursery places; the cruel stigmatisation after sharing your story on the media.

We shared in the pain of a family in crisis; of fear of deportation; of racial harassment. We acknowledged the turmoil that can be caused by the arrival of a brown envelope; by the washing machine breaking down; by decisions taken out-with your control.

We learnt that poverty brings in its wake many other problems: mental health issues that make life even harder; loneliness; frustration.

Being part of the Commission has given us insight into just some of these issues and a determination to fight and to challenge all aspects of poverty. We acknowledge that however much we think we understand, we often don't, and that we all must listen harder.

We have learnt that we have the power to create change. We have learned that we are part of something bigger: a movement for change with a determination to challenge.

Working Groups

The Truth about Poverty?

"When I go to the Job Centre I am greeted by security guards and leave my dignity at the front door."

The Poverty Truth Commission

NOTHING
ABOUT US
WITHOUT US
IS FOR US

THE TRUTH ABOUT POVERTY

"Pushing the pram for miles in the rain to go to a food bank where no-one will recognise me."

The Poverty Truth Commission

Alongside our wider conversations, 3 working groups concentrated the work of the Commission. Links to fuller reports and recommendations can be found on our website www.povertytruthcommission.org

Poverty and Asylum

- Seeking safety and asylum in our country, many are faced with poverty, racism, housing issues and deteriorating mental health. The group have collected stories of hope and determination in the midst of this to create a mini graphic novel to inspire and encourage those still in the system and to break down negative views.

Poverty and Mental Health

- Poverty increases the risk of mental health problems and is both a cause and consequence of mental ill health. The group focused on stories around homelessness (particularly the hostel system) and the criminal justice system. They worked with an artist to create silk images and shared these and some of the stories on social media during Mental Health Awareness Week.

Poverty, Cuts and Assessments

- Cuts to Child Tax Credits, the Benefit Cap and the 4 year freeze on Child Benefit have had devastating effects on families. Degrading health assessments have left many feeling like a fraud. The group researched these issues and listened directly to those affected, compiling their research and recommendations into a report for the UK and Scottish Government.

Many thanks are due to all those who contributed to this report - in particular those who took the time to share their story. Thanks to our funders: Comic Relief, the Scottish Government, the Church of Scotland and STV Children's Appeal - and to all who work hard to make the Poverty Truth Commission the creative movement of change it has become.

Get in touch to hear more about our work:



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