

Edinburgh Poverty Commission Publishes Initial Findings

The first evidence collected by the Edinburgh Poverty Commission, following its inception in November last year, has been published today (Monday, 13 May).

During the first phase of their work, themed 'Pockets', the Commission asked people about the pressures that keep incomes low and living costs high, specifically in Edinburgh. Organisations and citizens are now being asked to give their comments on the emerging findings as well as the second phase of the consultation, themed 'Prospects', which runs until 20 June. The Commission plans to publish its first interim findings in the summer.

The 'Prospects' consultation will look at health and wellbeing, education, career progression and the skills that our citizens need to ensure they can share in the city's success. Questions being asked include how living on a low income can affect your health and well being and how living in poverty can affect your start in life, education, training and jobs prospects.

During the consultation carried out earlier this year, the Commission heard from many organisations such as the Carnegie UK Trust and Scotcash about affordable credit; from CHAI and the Granton Information Centre about advice services and about how the benefits system is working in Edinburgh now that Universal Credit is coming in.

Amongst the issues raised by people from across the city were zero hours contracts causing uncertainty and anxiety, cuts to benefits, rent going up yearly but not wages, discrimination against people because of where they live, lack of jobs for

single parents and unaffordable childcare for working families.

Over the past few weeks, Commissioners have also visited and heard from a number of projects in the city – from support services to food banks – all to gain a first-hand insight into these pressures.

Jim McCormick, Chair of the Edinburgh Poverty Commission said: “It’s really important that we publish our findings at each stage of this process. That way we can adapt our work to have the greatest impact eradicating poverty in the city. It’s encouraging that so many people and organisations have taken the time to share their views with us as we can only succeed with a whole city approach.

“The comments we have received from people living in very difficult and real situations are a stark reminder that poverty in the capital is real and something we can take steps now to reduce.”

Cllr. Cammy Day, Vice Chair, said: “The quality of the responses we have received from organisations and citizens cross Edinburgh so far demonstrates a great willingness from communities to get involved in this important work.

“The feedback we have received is further evidence that Edinburgh is known for its prosperity but despite a successful economy, 13% of all workers in Edinburgh earn wages at rates below the living wage, and 10% of all workers rely on ‘non-permanent employment’.

“We introduced the Living Wage six years ago but a lot more needs to be done to encourage other employers across the city to do the same. When people become trapped in poverty we need to make sure that they know their rights and the alternatives available when it comes to affordable borrowing, social security and how to avoid the trap of high cost credit.

“The next phase of our consultation, themed ‘Prospects’ runs until 20 June. I would encourage anyone living in poverty or working in this area to help us make the changes we need so everyone can share in the city’s success.”