

Edinburgh called upon to end poverty within a decade

The figures relating to poverty in Edinburgh are stark. Some we are so familiar with that they now roll off the tongue, almost without thought as to the meaning behind them.

One in five children in Edinburgh live in poverty.

78,000 people live in relative poverty in Edinburgh. There is a complex way of calculating what that means [here](#), but put simply not enough income to cover basic needs.

The City of Edinburgh Council set up the independent group, Edinburgh Poverty Commission, under the chairmanship of Jim McCormick, with a view to finding ways of ending it in the capital. The report, *A Just Capital*, which they have just produced ends their work, and sends out a call to action to everyone in the city to help solve the issue by 2030.

The group believes this is the most extensive inquiry into poverty and the way to solve it which any Scottish local authority has ever undertaken.

One message which stands out is this one:

“To end poverty in the city, the single biggest transformation Edinburgh could achieve would be to make the experience of seeking help less painful, less complex, more humane, and more compassionate. We call on City of Edinburgh Council to lead in

the design and delivery of a new relationship based way of working for all public services in Edinburgh.”

The legacy of the Edinburgh Poverty Commission is to set up an action group called End Poverty Edinburgh, a new group made up of those with first-hand knowledge of what it is like to live on a low income. They will raise awareness and hold the city to account.

The report identifies seven key areas of action including housing, education and becoming a living wage city.

Adam McVey, Council Leader, said: “On behalf of the Council, I would like to extend my thanks to those in the Edinburgh Poverty Commission and End Poverty Edinburgh for the time, dedication and research that has gone into creating this report. I’m also extremely grateful to those who shared their personal experiences and those of their families in helping get to the root of the issues. Tackling poverty in our city is one of our key priorities as a Council – helping those who need it, making resources available for people and, ultimately, doing everything we can to eradicate it in Edinburgh.

“We know that the pandemic has been incredibly challenging for those who were experiencing or at risk of poverty in our city. The Commission has pulled no punches and got to the heart of the issues – while there is no doubt that the pandemic has exacerbated the situation, poverty in Edinburgh is a crisis that goes beyond one cause and we cannot ignore it. If we’re to make progress on the scale required, it needs a concentrated effort from us, our partners and allied organisations, local business and residents acting as one Team Edinburgh.

“The seven areas of action give our City clear and defined areas for us to focus on and we appreciate that they are interlinked and support each other. Our 2050 Edinburgh City

Vision is of a fair city where all residents share in its success and have a good level of wellbeing and life experience and we have been working with the Commission throughout our continued response to the pandemic to make that vision a reality, ensuring that as we rebuild our city we do it with our most vulnerable in mind.

“The educational attainment gap is a big priority for us and has been for a long while now. We were making good progress in this area before the pandemic but we’re mindful that the disruption to the school term earlier this year has widened that gap. Now we need to work with our schools and educational partners to double down on that work and ensure the progress continues to be made.

“We also know that access to and cost of housing is a central issue in Edinburgh and needs a focused and strategic approach in collaboration with the Scottish Government to deliver the new homes needed to make significant impact. We’ve already made progress around short term lets and will be ready to act quickly when regulations come into effect. We’re proud that Council houses being built right now are some of the best homes being built in the City but there is still work to be done to make sure we can provide good quality and affordable homes for everyone in our city who need them.

“The Edinburgh Poverty Commission has spent over two years listening to the voices of the people of Edinburgh and the reality faced by many of our residents, with COVID making it harder than ever for too many. That’s why the Council and the city has to come together to tackle both the cause and consequences of poverty. It will take time and won’t be easy, but we will ensure it remains at the heart of our policies as we drive the change needed across the Capital in partnership.”

The report will be presented to the Council’s Policy and Sustainability Committee when it meets on Tuesday, 6 October 2020, and, if it is passed by the committee, Edinburgh will

become the first local authority in the UK to commit to ending poverty on a specific timeline. Watch the meeting and read the council papers [online here](#).




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