



The All Party Parliamentary Group  
on  
**POVERTY**

**Minutes of the APPG on Poverty – Annual General Meeting**

Tuesday 5th February 2019, 14:30-15:00, Portcullis House (Room R)

**Members present:**

Lyn Brown MP  
Emma Dent-Coad MP  
Neil Gray MP  
Baroness Anna Healy of Primrose Hill  
Kevin Hollinrake MP (via phone)  
Baroness Ruth Lister  
Khalid Mahmood MP

**Apologies:**

Lord Bird  
Patricia Gibson MP  
Heidi Allen MP  
Dr Philippa Whitford MP

**Others present:**

Ben	Bessey	Office of Lyn Brown MP
Rianna	Gargiulo	The Equality Trust
Louisa	McGeehan	Child Poverty Action Group
John	Ricketts	Office of Lord Bird
Melanie	Rush	Office of Lord Bird
Tom	Say	The Trussell Trust
Oliver	Sidorczuk	Office of Lord Bird
Wanda	Wyporska	The Equality Trust

## **1. Attendees and apologies**

Baroness Ruth Lister confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

## **2. Election of APPG Officers**

Parliamentarians were re-elected into the following roles:

- Kevin Hollinrake MP – Co-Chair
- Neil Gray MP – Co-Chair
- Baroness Ruth Lister – Vice-Chair
- Heidi Allen MP – Vice-Chair
- Lord Bird – Vice-Chair
- Patricia Gibson MP – Vice-Chair
- Emma Dent-Coad MP – Officer
- Baroness Anna Healy of Primrose Hill – Officer
- Lyn Brown MP – Officer

## **3. Income and expenditure statement**

The income and expenditure statement was approved.

## **4. Options for work programme 2019**

Louisa McGeehan outlined three potential options for the APPG's work programme for this year.

### **1) Local welfare assistance after the social fund**

There is much work already underway to map local welfare assistance schemes that now replace the social fund. There are great variations in approach by local authorities in England – some have become non-cash systems, and some have closed entirely, effectively removing the support people have previously relied on in times of crisis. In Scotland, the Scottish Welfare Fund promotes a national approach. The APPG could usefully hold sessions to pull together evidence gathered, ask questions to understand the issues and make recommendations for action.

- Louisa described this as an exercise to bring together existing work taking place nationally, and inviting relevant people to share the findings.

### **2) In-work poverty**

We know that the majority of children growing up in poverty today have at least one parent in work. But work is not proving to be the route out of poverty it should be. We know little about the dynamics of in-work poverty and its causes, but these are likely to be related to low pay, insecure work, small hour contracts, unavailability of childcare facilities and a lack of opportunities for progression to enable working families to escape poverty. This will be a continuing focus for Child Poverty Action Group and some evidence sessions led by the APPG – perhaps including experts by experience - would be complementary and helpful.

- Lyn Brown MP mentioned that the Fabians has released a report in the early 2000s on the topic, looking into the lack of in-work progression in many jobs. She suggested we may want to inquire as to whether they were intending to revisit the issue and if they may be interested in contributing to the APPG.

### **3) Making universal credit fit for families**

APPG members have previously discussed an inquiry into the difficult issue of how to promote fairer distribution of a single universal credit payment within families. One option under discussion is the shift to a default position of splitting the UC payment equally between the adults in two adult families. Also under consideration is the option to pay the majority of the payment to the parent who is the primary carer for any children. The APPG could hold evidence sessions to further explore the issues and make recommendations. However, given that there is an APPG on universal credit, that group may be better placed to examine the issues.

- Emma Dent-Coad MP highlighted work being done within her constituency on the impact of Grenfell for impoverishment and indebtedness, and suggested that looking more broadly into the relationship between crisis and debt may be a good route to take.
- Kevin Hollinrake MP noted that the DWP are not always aware of the issues relating to UC.
- Baroness Ruth Lister, who also sits on the APPG for Universal Credit, said that the current approach of the group is to offer sessions every two months or so where the group hears directly from those affected by UC. There is potential for working with the APPG if it is desired.
- It was felt that a focus in this area may duplicate the work of the APPG on UC and the Work and Pensions Select Committee.

**Officers agreed to focus on ‘in-work poverty’ for 2019.** Trade unions, employers and existing contacts, such as Business in the Community, were agreed as initial contacts to provide insights to the APPG.

However, it was also agreed to have a ‘one-off’ session to explore local welfare assistance, as well as continuing to consider this as a potential theme for future years. Work is already being done by The Trussell Trust, Turn2us and Greater Manchester Poverty Action on identifying gaps in local authorities’ provision and looking into alternatives to the social fund, which can be drawn on.