

Scottish **Anti Poverty** Review



EDITION 43 | WINTER 2025



IN THIS ISSUE

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EDITORIAL TEAM

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The Poverty Alliance

DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in the Scottish Anti-Poverty Review do not necessarily reflect those of The Poverty Alliance.

ABOUT THE POVERTY ALLIANCE

The Poverty Alliance exists to combat poverty in Scotland by working with people and communities to affect change. We act as the national anti-poverty network in Scotland, engaging with voluntary organisations, policy makers and politicians. Our vision is of a sustainable Scotland free of poverty, with dignity and social and economic justice for all.

We will tackle poverty by working with individuals, organisations and communities to affect change in the distribution of power and resources. To do this, we will:

- support the development of policies and practices which promote social justice and combat poverty
- work with people and communities experiencing poverty to help them challenge poverty
- build a strong anti-poverty network in Scotland
- raise awareness and change attitudes about poverty

Welcome

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Editorial

Taking hope and solidarity forward from Scotland Demands Better.

Peter Kelly, Chief Executive, The Poverty Alliance

This edition of the Scottish Anti-Poverty Review is a special one, bringing together articles reflecting on a very important campaign and event. The Scotland Demands Better national march and rally that took place in Edinburgh on the 25th of October 2025 was designed to mobilise civil society around our shared concerns about the faltering progress on poverty in Scotland.

From the outset we knew this would be a tall order. There are good reasons why we rarely see people on the streets of Scotland or elsewhere in the UK demonstrating about poverty. For those parts of civil society where concern about poverty is most central, largely the third sector and charities, there is not, generally speaking, strong traditions of this kind of mobilisation and activity. There's lots of campaigning in our sector, lots of great, innovative and impactful campaigning, but rarely do we step outside some of our usual ways of working to show a bolder, more forthright side.

organisations who formed the steering group for the SDB campaign and the early adopters of the campaign, many of them contributing to this edition, was to find ways to overcome the genuine barriers to action that existed. They, and the nearly 300 organisations that supported the campaign, undoubtedly rose to the challenge.

Our ambition was for thousands of people to gather in Edinburgh. We aimed to have charities both large and small marching alongside trade unionists, faith groups, campaigners of every stripe. And we wanted to have a festival like rally that was family friendly and hopeful. We achieved all of this.

Reading many of the articles in this edition I am struck by the recurring theme of hopefulness. Hope is a difficult thing to generate or to hold on to these days. Being an anti-poverty activists and campaigner requires an ability to remain hopeful, even when things are not going in the right direction. The ability has been tested to the limits over recent years.

But perhaps one of the biggest successes of the 25th of October was the hope that it inspired in campaigners who have every right to feel a little cynical at times. That hopefulness came not because we believed that change is just around the corner because of one demonstration. Rather it came from the sense of solidarity that was engendered that day.

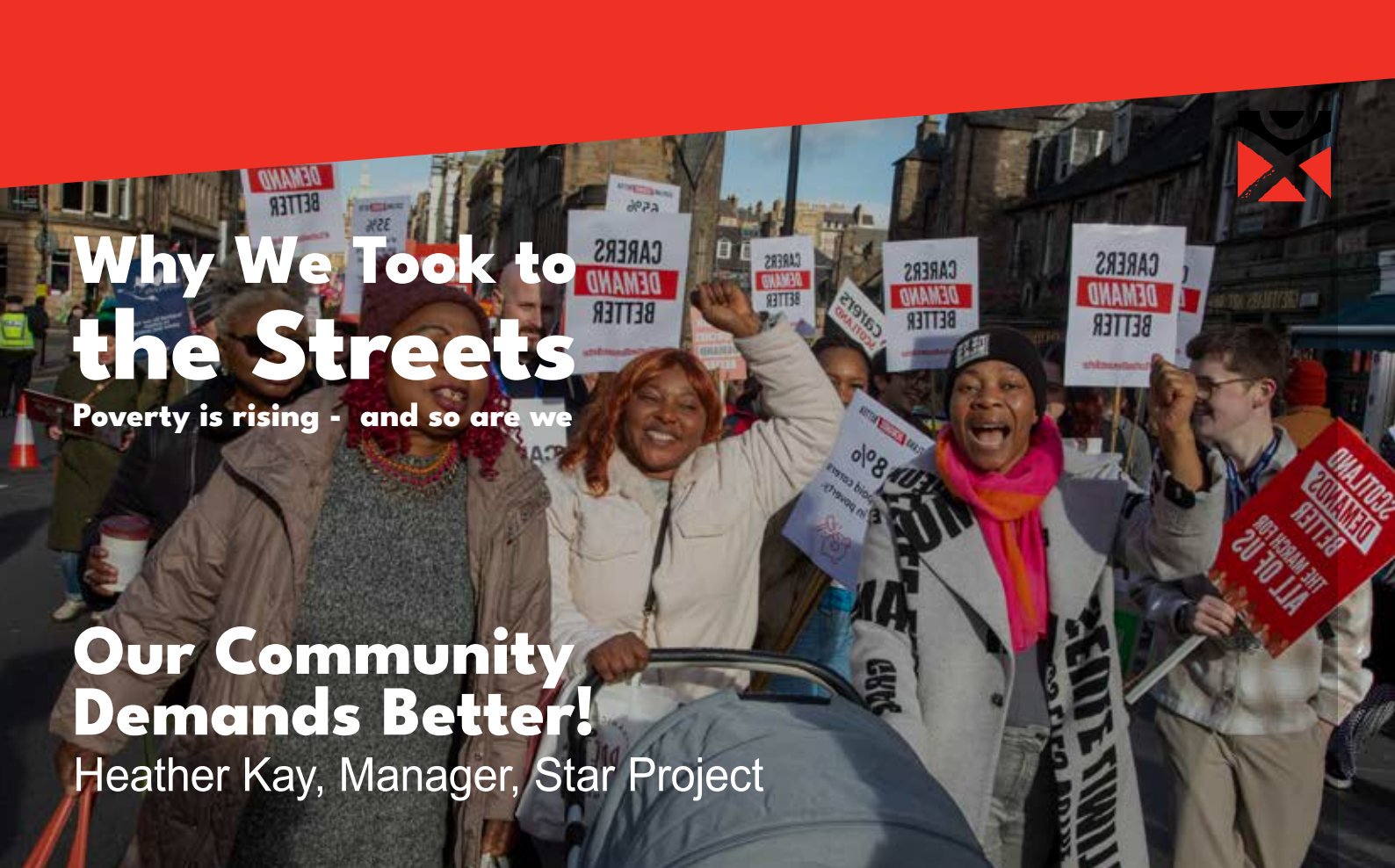


It felt that we were more than individual activists, concerned about our key issues, or workers delivering vital, but often overlooked, services, or even that we were people living with the day-to-day reality of poverty, ignored and stigmatised. That day, whether we trade unionists, charity workers, anti-racism campaigners, or just concerned citizens, we were all part of Scotland's anti-poverty movement.

We know that retaining not only that sense of hope, but the solidarity that was felt, and the connections that were created is now our most important task. Darren McGarvey spoke on the day, reprinted here, of the seriousness of our task, and the threat of those who would wish to speak for those who have been failed by the system for too long. It is a threat we must take very seriously.

Across civil society we know what the implications are of the continued failure to address social and economic inequality. Remaining hopeful, we must remember that we are now building this movement from a stronger position that we were in just a year ago. We have now demonstrated that we can come together to show our strength, and the seriousness of our intent, in ways that we decide and that we determine. There is little doubt we will need to do so again in the future.

If we are to remain hopeful, then it is vital that we must have successes. The struggle to finally end the Two Child Limit is, at this moment, a very important and very big win for all campaigners, including those who were involved in SDB. It will not only lift hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty across the UK but also reminds us of what effective and long-term campaigning can deliver. As we go forward into 2026, and a now active election campaign for the next Scottish Parliament, we must take with us the lessons of the victory of the Two Child Limit campaign and the hopefulness and solidarity of Scotland Demands Better.



Why We Took to the Streets

Poverty is rising - and so are we

Our Community Demands Better!

Heather Kay, Manager, Star Project

At STAR Project, poverty is not an abstract concept. It's something we respond to every single day. It's there in the empty cupboards, in the anxiety at the end of the week when money runs out, in the impossible choices between heating and eating, and in the dignity of people who continue to show up for their families and communities despite relentless pressure.

That's why we were proud to stand alongside communities from across the country as part of Scotland Demands Better. For us, this was not a symbolic gesture. It was a necessary act of collective voice.

We demand better because the current system is failing us. Every week, we support individuals and families who are working hard yet still can't meet the basic cost of living. In-work poverty, insecure employment and rising costs mean that work is no longer a reliable route out of hardship.

We see the disproportionate impact on disabled people and unpaid carers, many of whom are navigating complex benefit systems while providing essential care that would otherwise fall to overstretched public services. We see parents skipping meals so their children can eat. We see older people isolated by fuel poverty. These are not individual failures; they are structural!

As one community member put it when speaking about Universal Credit:

"It's not a safety net, it's a noose. And the longer you're on it, the tighter it gets."

Scotland Demands Better gave our community a way to say, collectively: This. Stops. Now!

Campaigning Is in Our DNA

At STAR, joining Scotland Demands Better was not a shift in direction; it was a continuation of over 26 years of challenging the systems that drive poverty. Campaigning is core to our identity.

Long before the cost-of-living crisis trended on social media, we were witnessing its impact and taking that reality to the streets. When fuel poverty intensified, we did not limit our response to warm spaces and crisis support; we demonstrated. When social security changes pushed more families into hardship, we did not simply adapt our services; we challenged the policies causing the harm. Support keeps people afloat, but it's campaigning that changes the tide, and we have always done both.

Scotland Demands Better gave us a national platform to amplify what our community has been saying for years: that poverty is not inevitable, that dignity is non-negotiable, and that communities have the right to demand more than survival. We have spoken out before, we are speaking out now, and we will continue to do so for as long as injustice remains entrenched in the system. 'Hauding oor wheesht' doesn't protect our community, collective action does!

Linking Demand to Decision

Our involvement in Scotland Demands Better followed from our engagement in national policy conversations around tax and public spending. We recently spoke at a Tax Justice Scotland event exploring how fiscal decisions shape the realities faced by communities like ours. The message was clear: budgets are moral documents. They reflect whose lives are prioritised and whose are treated as expendable.

With the UK Budget recently announced, the contrast between what we see daily in our community and the level of ambition within national fiscal decisions felt stark. The Budget did not reflect the scale or urgency of the crisis being lived on the ground. For our community, Scotland Demands Better was the human response to that gap between political rhetoric and lived experience.

How This Connects to Our Work at STAR

Since 1999, we have been delivering long-lasting positive social outcomes, building safer, more connected and resilient communities in Renfrewshire. Our services include daily drop-ins, financial support, food provision, creative and therapeutic programmes, lived-experience panels, family support, men's wellbeing groups, and crisis response.

But increasingly, we are responding to systemic crisis rather than short-term hardship. What were once occasional emergencies have become a sustained reality. Demand for food support has risen sharply. Energy debt is now a constant presence. More people are presenting in crisis, with complex needs and deep exhaustion.

Mobilising Our Community Differently

One of the most powerful aspects of Scotland Demands Better was how it enabled us to mobilise alongside our community rather than "on behalf of" them. Thirty-six members of the STAR community travelled together to Edinburgh to take part in the march. This included people with lived experience of poverty, volunteers, staff and allies.

Before the march, we designed our own placards through creative workshops. These were not generic slogans. They were personal, determined, and profoundly moving. Messages such as "We are human beings, not statistics" reflected lived experience rather than soundbites.

One woman who completed the march with significant mobility challenges told us: "I've never done anything like this before. I've needed a lot of help all my life. I'm doing the full march. I'm doing it to make me proud and to make a difference for my family."

She refused offers to shorten the route and completed the whole march. Watching her was one of the most powerful moments of the day.

What Scotland Demands Better Changed

For some, this was the first time they had spoken publicly about their experience of poverty. Being part of a national movement reframed those experiences not as personal shame, but as evidence of systemic injustice. There was a renewed sense that "we are part of something bigger". Advocacy no longer felt distant or reserved for professionals. Lived experience was not simply consulted. It led.

Unity, Not Silos

Scotland Demands Better encouraged collective organising, sustained pressure and communities working together rather than in competition. Division between organisations only weakens our collective power and makes it easier for decision-makers to ignore the realities of poverty. We see the same with the rise in racism, hatred and fear-based narratives in our community. These forces thrive on division and distraction. They pit people against one another while decision makers often go unchallenged. This "divide and conquer" dynamic is insidious, perpetuates harm, and is terrifyingly convenient for decision-makers. While they set us against each other, more punitive policies get passed, stigma is stoked, and vulnerable people, quite literally, lose their lives. The march was the perfect antidote to this.

What Must Come Next

Marches set the conditions for change to become possible. However, for this momentum to deliver tangible outcomes, it must now be met with bold, political action.

Urgent priorities include:

- A Minimum Income Guarantee
- A dignity-based social security system
- Action on energy debt and fuel poverty
- Recognition of unpaid carers and disabled people
- Long-term investment in community organisations

The recent UK Budget only underlines how vital it is that this momentum is not lost. Without bold fiscal and political action, we will continue to bear the cost of inequality.

A Call to Decision-Makers

Our community did not march as recipients of charity. They marched as citizens demanding justice. It strengthened our resolve. We will continue to support our community not only to survive, but to organise, speak out and lead change. Scotland Demands Better because budgets are moral documents and right now they are costing lives.



Nurturing the power of persuasion

- A speech for Scotland Demands Better

Darren McGarvey, author, musician and social commentator

A day like today, when so many strands of the social justice movement come together – as both an expression of solidarity and a statement of purpose – is very much welcome.

I think I speak for many here: people with a lifelong commitment to equality. It's been a tough few years. Not only for the cause itself, but for those who've spent years in the fight – organising, campaigning, building unions, running tenants' groups, charities, community projects, mutual aid recovery fellowships – trying our best to keep the flame of hope alive through some very dark times. There was a time, not so long ago, when the battleground was purely political. The task was to speak self-evident truths about poverty, education, health, criminal justice and work – to organise, to plan, and to press those truths up the power structure with such force that decision makers would eventually have no choice but to listen. Though the fight for change was never easy then, I think we can all agree, it was far simpler than it is today. For as we all know – the battleground has changed.

The fight is now psychological, cultural, digital – scattered across more fronts than any movement can easily track. And it's no longer just the political class that need convincing. Increasingly – and perhaps most worryingly – it's the very people we have always claimed to represent. It pains me to concede that in recent years we have taken a beating, as has our cause. We no longer hold a monopoly on speaking for the working class, the poor, or the vulnerable that we believed we once did. That honour is now fiercely contested.

Our vision of a Scotland where the spoils of our rich resources are spread more evenly now competes with another vision – one which, in my view, is far less honest about whose interests it really serves. Spend time in any working-class community across this country and you'll feel it:

a new force shaping opinion, channelling legitimate anger and resentment, and organising – often more effectively than we are.

And while people are right to be angry – angry about hollowed-out public services, decades of wage stagnation, and the sky-high cost of living – the colours of the St Andrew's cross are now raised, not as an expression of national pride, openness or of hope for the future, but as boundary markers.

Far right organisers openly speak in the language of ethnic solidarity, as though tougher borders and mass deportations could magically rebuild schools, fix hospitals, or cut rents. By swallowing this deception wholesale, Scottish patriots misplace their grievance.

For them, the problem isn't that decision makers of all stripes have long sided with power and wealth at the expense of their communities – but that immigrants supposedly enjoy an unfair advantage in the great rat race. In a country still defined by vast inequality – waving the flag can appear an act of strength, a symbol of resistance: but when the policies demanded won't raise wages, cut bills, or fill a single pothole, it becomes a hollow gesture – a poverty of political aspiration, equal parts tragic and absurd.



The Saltire takes on a very different meaning when waved beside placards that say,

“Kill them all, let God sort them out,” outside hotels housing asylum seekers.

And let's be clear for the benefit of those who are perhaps hard of hearing: The Saltire takes on a very different meaning when waved beside placards that say, “Kill them all, let God sort them out,” outside hotels housing asylum seekers.

While that conduct doesn't represent everyone who flies the emblem – and that's important to stress – it's of equal import to note that those harbouring bigoted intent feel increasingly confident to run their racism up the flagpole for all to see. Not with an inspiring vision or a plan for the future – but as a tattered white rag of surrender. A surrender to the politics of ill-feeling and contempt for the vulnerable. A politics now steered by the same forces that gave us privatisation, austerity and Brexit – debacles that hurt working-class communities more than any asylum hotel ever could.

With misplaced anger as their only compass, and foreign folk devils forever in the crosshairs, this new patriotism is too busy chasing shadows to recognise the real culprits standing in plain sight.

We now face the spectre of Reform – and the powerful story they like to tell. It's their favourite political party trick: that they're outsiders, giving voice to people who've been ignored and sneered at. Their supporters, in turn, bask in the flattering glow of rebellion: We're the ones who see through the lies! We're the ones finally sticking two fingers up to the elites!

It's a good story. But it isn't as true as it feels. Reform isn't breaking the establishment – they're preparing to wear its new mask.

Nigel Farage likes to cosplay as an outsider, but he's the freshly anointed face of the right flank of that same system. For years, he's set Britain's political agenda – something that doesn't happen without serious establishment backing. Far from being radical, the wall-to-wall coverage of Farage sits neatly within a long British tradition – endless airtime for privately educated men whose central occupation is going after section of the population who can't fight back. And while he claims to speak for the common man, those who've helped normalise his reactionary politics are cut from equally privileged cloth. Which is to say...they're about as anti-establishment as an Order of the Garter ceremony.

They can wheel out Lee Anderson for a photo op as often as they like – but their pint-and-pub-stool populism is an act: Reform is a low-rent Bullingdon Boys Club for Tory rejects with hardcore Thatcher fetishes.

Reform don't challenge inequality – they plan to entrench it. Wake up and smell the foie gras, folks. These are not tribunes of the left-behind – they're the privately educated ignoramuses who abandoned you.

They shed crocodile tears for the traditional family – a decade after applauding austerity that tore households apart. They sneer at the long-term sick – while circling like vultures to sell the NHS off piece by piece.

When the sun rise on the first morning of Farage's utopia – when the last small boats have run ashore, the final asylum claims are denied, and Union Jacks, St George's Crosses and Saltires hang from every lamppost – a grateful UK will wake only to find her rivers still running with raw sewage, her GP surgeries still overflowing, and her roads still a fresh hell to drive.



Train fares will still make your eyes water, wages will still fall short of a living, and prisons will still be bursting at the seams. High streets will remain ghost towns, the cost of living still dizzying, and women and girls still abused without justice. On that morning, this grateful nation will discover that after everything it has sacrificed, it still cannot bear to look at itself – only then, there will be no more refugees left to blame.

They'll clear out the immigrants – then come for what remains of your right to collectively bargain. They'll line your streets with flags – then hand your family's health to faceless corporations – whose credentials are never checked at the border. They'll have your kids singing God Save the King every morning – then condemn them to lives of insecure employment and a hostile welfare state in sickness and old age.

And if they get their way – once all the “problematic” immigrants are gone – the very patriots painting the town red in fits of nationalist fury will then wake to find crimson targets on their own backs.

Reform are not your allies. They are not your friends. They are the establishment's spoiled, tantrummy children – role-playing as rebels, feigning concern for broken communities they only acknowledge when there's anger to harvest. Reform isn't parking a tank on the establishment's lawn – it's cutting the grass and pruning the hedges.

They claim to care about the safety of women – but where were Nigel Farage and Richard Tice when a financial crisis caused by bankers was paid for by austerity that hit the pockets of women hardest?

They claim to value the safety of children, but what did they have to say when the two-child benefit cap pushed millions of kids into the very poverty and deprivation that increases the likelihood of abuse and neglect?

So, let's stop asking far right figureheads about immigration. Ask them what they know about the building blocks of health – secure work, affordable housing, access to decent nutrition, adequately resourced public services.

Let's stop asking them about the “two-tier justice system.” Ask them what they intend to do about two-tier education – where seven per cent of privately educated people still dominate more than half of the top jobs in this country. The truth is, and I implore those taken in by these phony pint and pub stool populists to recognise, that the far right have no credible answer to the problems facing this country – because they are the problem facing this country.

But today, we gather not just to demand more of the Scottish Government – but to demand more of ourselves.

Because our power goes beyond mere policy or protest – we must also nurture the power of persuasion, meeting people where they are, not where we'd like them to be.

And I believe we are up to that challenge. The challenge of remembering that the digital public square is a poor substitute for real world engagement. The challenge of showing restraint in the face of sneering client hacks and paper-tiger provocateurs. The challenge of mindfulness that when we assume a public platform, for whatever cause, we are speaking to more our own political tribe; persuasion often lies not simply in being across the facts, or holding strong convictions, but in how we hold ourselves in the heat of debate.

We are not afraid of debate – the prospect interests and excites us.

We don't shy away from testing our ideas against theirs – we welcome it.

We don't merely tolerate arguments from the far right – we're ready to meet them, head-on, one-by-one.

There is a time for nuance, and a time for clarity. A time for argument – and a time to stand our ground. And that time, my friends, is now.

If it's a battle for the soul of Scotland, the far right want – that is precisely what they will get.

Because Scotland does demand better – not better slogans or scapegoats, but better solidarity. Better organisation. Better vision.

A Scotland that doesn't turn a blind eye to the failures of the Scottish Government but holds it feet to the furnace. A Scotland that doesn't hoard resentment, but redistributes hope and opportunity. A Scotland that doesn't build its pride on who it excludes, but on who it empowers.

**That's the Scotland I want to raise my children in.
That's the Scotland that I will always fight for.
That we should all be fighting for.
That's the Scotland that demands better.**



EIS: Standing Up to Poverty,

Standing Up for Quality Education

Andrea Bradley, General Secretary, Educational Institute of Scotland

It's more than concerning, it's deeply disturbing, in fact, that in Scotland, one of the richest countries in the world, more than a quarter of children are still living in poverty. It's even more disturbing that two thirds of those children live in households where at least one adult is in paid employment.

Clearly, work isn't paying as it should for thousands of workers in Scotland, while the safety net of social security for those who need it isn't passing the safety test either.

The appalling consequence of these factors, further compounded with the high cost of living, is that tens and tens of thousands of children and young people in Scotland, continue to leave for school in the morning, with nothing in their stomachs because there's no food for a breakfast. They go to school hungry each day- that's if they're able to overcome the poverty-related challenges they otherwise face in getting up and out in the mornings at all, with data pertaining to absence and persistent absence indicating that more young people are struggling to attend school regularly and consistently. The EIS argues that some of this worrying trend in respect of school attendance rates must be directly attributable to the cumulative impact of austerity-related poverty.

When thousands of the young people who do make it into school come home at the end of the day, there's not enough food in the cupboards to feed them, their siblings and their parents a decent evening meal. Yet this country is awash with wealth- wealth that if fairly distributed, could provide all citizens, regardless of the source of their incomes- from salaries to social security to pensions- to live and to live well.

The ambition of the trade union movement is and must always be for workers and all citizens, to live and to live well... to have bread and to have roses too. We make no apology for our vision.

While we continue to strive for it, though, what a brutal lesson is being taught day after day to a quarter of Scotland's children: that it is somehow acceptable that they and their families would not have enough food, not have enough clothes, that they would not have enough heat and comfort in their homes to feel safe and secure as children should, as we all should, when others have all of these things- many plentifully so. That somehow the truth of the matter is that they have less because they are worth less. Because poverty is as maleficent to self-esteem and mental health as it is to physical health and wellbeing. And it's that toxic blend of harms that can wreck the educational and life chances of our youngest citizens, in too many cases irrevocably.

We know that being poor doesn't just hold young people back in Primary 1 or 5 or 7, when they're learning to read and write, to understand science and social subjects; when they're learning to paint, and to dance and to sing, to think critically and to regulate emotions; or only hold them back when they sit their National 4s or National 5s or Higher at Secondary. We know that poverty blights whole lives into adulthood.

In general, as adults, children who've grown up in poverty will be sicker; they'll be more likely to suffer poor mental health; less likely to be in decently paid work; more likely to be in poor housing; more likely to suffer addiction; more likely to be in prison.

They'll be less likely to live happy, fulfilling lives with the security, love and dignity that human beings need and deserve equally.

One might be tempted to accept the false narrative that that poverty is inevitable and that there's nothing that any of us can do about it. The EIS unequivocally rejects such fallacy.

In 2022 a study by the Glasgow Centre for Population Health and the University of Glasgow concluded that between 2012 and 2019 there were almost 335,000 more deaths than expected as a result of the Tory UK Government policy of austerity.



That amounts to more people dying in the UK as a result of political decision-making than were killed by the Covid pandemic. The academics who carried out the research concluded that these premature deaths are directly linked to cuts in public services and social security provision. The research demonstrated quite clearly that poverty is political.

Around the same time that this research was published, BBC Scotland investigations identified that thousands of children in Scotland are now being treated for malnutrition. Against the backdrop of burgeoning foodbank use across Scotland, hunger and malnutrition are an endemic feature of 21st century Scotland, because of the calculated political decisions being made at UK level... and whilst the Scottish Government has taken some steps to mitigate the damage, more could and should be done to respond to the fact that some children in Scotland today are not only frequently hungry but are malnourished in the truest medical sense of the word.

With this in mind, the Scottish Government's decision not to provide universal free school meals to all school-aged young people is a political choice- a wrong one, in the view of the EIS. If it is right to provide free school meals for children in primaries 1 to 5, with all the associated physical, social, emotional and cognitive benefits, it cannot be right to deny a daily healthy, stigma-free meal to all young people from P6 to S6. The EIS will continue to press for the right, socially just political choice to be made by the next Scottish Government.

The EIS understands social justice to be a matter of social conscience and political will. Lack of such is why we have widespread poverty, hunger, and health inequalities at all in Scotland and other parts of the UK. As a phenomenon, it is not inevitable, such as the weather is or gravity is. Poverty is a political construct, intentionally built. It is therefore within the collective power of people- people who elect our governments- to deconstruct it, to press for change, to vote and to hold politicians fiercely to account on their record of keeping promises, towards ending the poverty the kind of which continues to be a shameful scourge on Scotland.

As part of the trade union movement, the EIS is committed to organising against poverty, to calling out the economic and political choices that are creating it, and calling for those decisions to be undone. If we don't, indignity and inequality, including relative to educational experiences and outcomes, will persist- unacceptable in itself- and we'll also leave the doors wide open to the very dangerous influence of the far right in our communities and in our political institutions. Tackling poverty is mission-critical for the upholding of human rights and democracy.

As an education union, the EIS is crystal clear on the critical role of Education in that fight and in mitigating the damage that poverty can do to the lives of young people, families, communities and our whole society.

The EIS Stand Up for Quality Education campaign continues to press for increased education funding and resourcing that takes full account of the fact that a quarter of a million children in Scotland live in poverty, thousands

more just above the threshold of poverty, and that in some communities, this means 1 in 2 children being from families that don't have enough food for everyone in the house or enough fuel to heat the home or provide hot water. The barriers to learning for thousands of children and young people in our classrooms are huge. Without sufficient staffing and resources, the struggle to close the poverty-related achievement and attainment gap is all up-hill, the destination always beyond sight.

While the EIS keeps up the political campaigning, we encourage our members, working together, to do what they reasonably can in their schools and other education settings, to mitigate the impact of poverty on young people's education.

The EIS's recent publication 'Standing Up to Poverty' is intended to help our members do this. It contains advice based on the insights of teachers who day and daily are working hard to support young people whose family incomes are low and who might, as a result, suffer further stigma, and social and educational exclusion if anti-poverty policies and practices were not in place in their schools. The EIS anti-poverty advice for the classroom is important because it offers teachers some potential solutions to the many dilemmas and challenges that arise in our schools when the intention is to provide good quality learning and social experiences for young people, whilst making sure that no young person is excluded or stigmatised.

The EIS also offers equity-related professional learning to EIS and non-EIS members on a national scale, through our PACT project. Originally co-funded by the Scottish Government but now funded solely by the EIS, PACT professional learning is designed to empower teachers and schools to minimise the potential damage of poverty and socio-economic disadvantage to learning in the classroom.

A dedicated PACT staff member and the course of professional learning supports participants to learn more together about the nature, causes and consequences of poverty, particularly the consequences with regards to education; and about the potential levers that schools and teachers can employ, and the school policy and pedagogical approaches that might be effective, in seeking to further mitigate the damage that poverty does to young people's participation in and enjoyment of school, and critically, to their outcomes, towards securing more equitable outcomes for children and young people who live in poverty.

Teachers who undertake this crucial programme of learning are supported by the union as fully-fledged 'PACTivists' to share their learning further within their school communities. In this way, the EIS is helping teachers to be in the vanguard, striving for social justice and equity in education in classrooms all over the country.

As a union, we're proud of the efforts that we've made over a long number of years and continue to make, towards achieving a better, more equitable educational future for Scotland's young people, ultimately leading to a stronger, more prosperous, more socially just and cohesive society for all, with poverty and all its pernicious effects consigned, at last, to the history books.

Women Demand Better



WOMEN'S RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS

Investing in women must be fundamental in our solutions to transform our communities and eradicate poverty for good

Lucy Hughes, Policy and Parliamentary Manager

On a chilly October morning in Edinburgh, Engender joined the women's and anti-racist bloc of the Scotland Demands Better march to demand urgent political action to tackle women's poverty. As an intersectional feminist policy and advocacy organisation, our work has long centred on revealing and addressing the deep financial insecurities women face in Scotland, both as a cause and a consequence of gender inequality.

Our manifesto for the Holyrood Election next year, 'Investing in Women, Transforming Communities', places this work front and centre and includes many of the key areas in the Scotland Demands Better campaign. This includes asking for targeted measures to tackle women's poverty, investment in social security, for unpaid carers to be valued and for women to have access to safe, secure and affordable housing. We strongly believe that if the next Scottish Government shapes its policies and investment to meet the needs of the most marginalised women in Scotland, our whole society will benefit.

We hear from women across the country that their lives are increasingly impacted by financial insecurity. The disproportionate burden of caring responsibilities they carry continues to go unrecognised and undervalued and existing social security entitlements do not meet their needs, especially with the rising cost of living. The fallout of over a decade of reduced funding for public services, the legacy of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis are leading to dramatic falls in living standards for women across Scotland. By 2027, the most economically marginalised women in the UK are projected to have

endured a 21% reduction in living standards since 2010, with single mothers, Black and Asian women, and disabled women most severely impacted. A recent study found that austerity measures have resulted in decreased life expectancy in the UK, with women almost twice as impacted as men.

The status quo is not working. This is why we joined the Scotland Demands Better campaign, alongside our sister organisations. We used this campaign as an opportunity to make it loud and clear that too many women in Scotland are tired of struggling. They are tired of navigating systems that don't work for them and living in an economy that isn't designed to value or recognise their contribution to society. We want to see the campaign build on the progress made so far, to help us push for the next Scottish Government and Parliament to invest in women and transform our communities for the better.

Better jobs for women must include targeted action to tackle the gender pay gap and labour market inequality they experience head-on. It is widely recognised that more than two-thirds of children in poverty live in working households, yet this must be better linked to the fact that 60% of workers earning below the Real Living Wage are women. Lower income from paid work disproportionately affects groups of women facing other forms of inequality and marginalisation.

For example, Black and minority ethnic women are overrepresented in lower-paid and more precarious job roles that are undervalued. Disabled women also experience profound inequality in access to paid work and face barriers in getting the support they need in employment.

Women's disproportionate caring responsibilities often lead to them working in less secure and part-time jobs, with significant barriers to returning to work after periods of caring. All of this leads to women's lower earnings from paid work throughout their lifetimes. This has lifelong impacts on their economic security, including lower savings and pensions. For example, figures show 23% of women aged 85+ live in poverty in large part due to pension inequalities.

Better investment in life's essentials for women means recognising their higher reliance on public services, as they make up the majority of primary carers, part-time workers, secondary earners, and public sector workers. This investment must also include targeted measures that address women's increased vulnerability to the rising cost of living. In our manifesto, we are calling for the introduction of a new 'Women's Equality Fund'. This would provide targeted financial support for marginalised groups of women currently falling through the gaps of existing entitlements. This should focus on unpaid carers, women with experience of domestic abuse, women with No Recourse to Public Funds, and disabled women.

There are also deeply gendered experiences in access to life's essentials that must be addressed in our policy solutions. For example, women are far more likely to rent in the social housing sector and pay a higher proportion of their income on rent and are less likely to own their own home. Women are also less likely to own a car or hold a driver's licence due to cost and face barriers to accessing public transport designed for able-bodied commuters, travelling from the suburbs into city centres without dependents. Yet, strategies on housing, transport and planning rarely address their needs.

Better social security for women means addressing the deeply misogynistic design of our social security system. We must ensure there are adequate levels of support to meet rising costs, in particular for the women providing unpaid care in our communities. Tackling child poverty via increased social security is also deeply intertwined with women's economic situation. Women make up the majority of applicants (82%) for devolved social security payments relating to children, such as the Scottish Child Payment, Best Start Grant, and Child Disability Payment. Latest figures show 1 in 3 children in lone-parent families remain trapped in poverty in 2021–24, with 92% of lone parents being women. Despite this, the link between women's economic inequality and child poverty is still vastly unrecognised in Scottish Government policies. There are significant data gaps that fail to show the full picture of how women, and minoritised women in particular, act as 'shock absorbers' of poverty and how resources are unequally shared within the household.



One of the things that struck me most at the march, while looking around at the various banners and signs, was the wide variety of the groups that came together as part of the campaign. Building broad coalitions on issues like anti-poverty is vital because the sharp decline in living standards for many women is occurring against a backdrop of increasing polarisation. There are rising challenges to equality, diversity and inclusion measures, and attacks on women's rights globally. Led by 'Women Against the Far Right', it felt vital to be part of a specific bloc that centred the fights against gender injustice and racism, to show the interconnected nature of our struggles within the anti-poverty movement.

It is even more vital that we stand united across our different organisations when bad faith actors seek to exploit widening economic inequality. By coming together to keep the focus on the real causes of poverty, we can fight back against the narratives that create division and stoke racism against migrant communities. We are stronger when we advocate together for politicians to fix our broken economic system. Alongside colleagues, allies and thousands of people who marched that day, we believe not only that a better, more equal Scotland is possible, but that collectively, we already have many of the solutions. What we need now are political leaders who are bold and brave enough to join us in demanding better for women, therefore, demanding better for Scotland.

Standing together to say

Scotland Demands Better

action on social justice and
climate justice must go hand in
hand



Becky Kenton-Lake, Coalition Manager at Stop Climate Chaos Scotland, Scotland's climate coalition.

Recent times have brought many challenges for climate campaigners. Climate targets have been weakened, policies watered down, delayed and scrapped, and we have lost consensus on the need for action between the main parties. And all of this is happening at a time when increasingly extreme climate impacts are devastating people's lives in all parts of the world.

That's why it was so positive to join anti-poverty campaigners under the Scotland Demands Better banner - made possible as it is a broad yet direct message, enabling diverse groups to come together to express their frustration with the lack of progress on both environmental and social justice, show solidarity and give hope about the better world that is in our grasp.

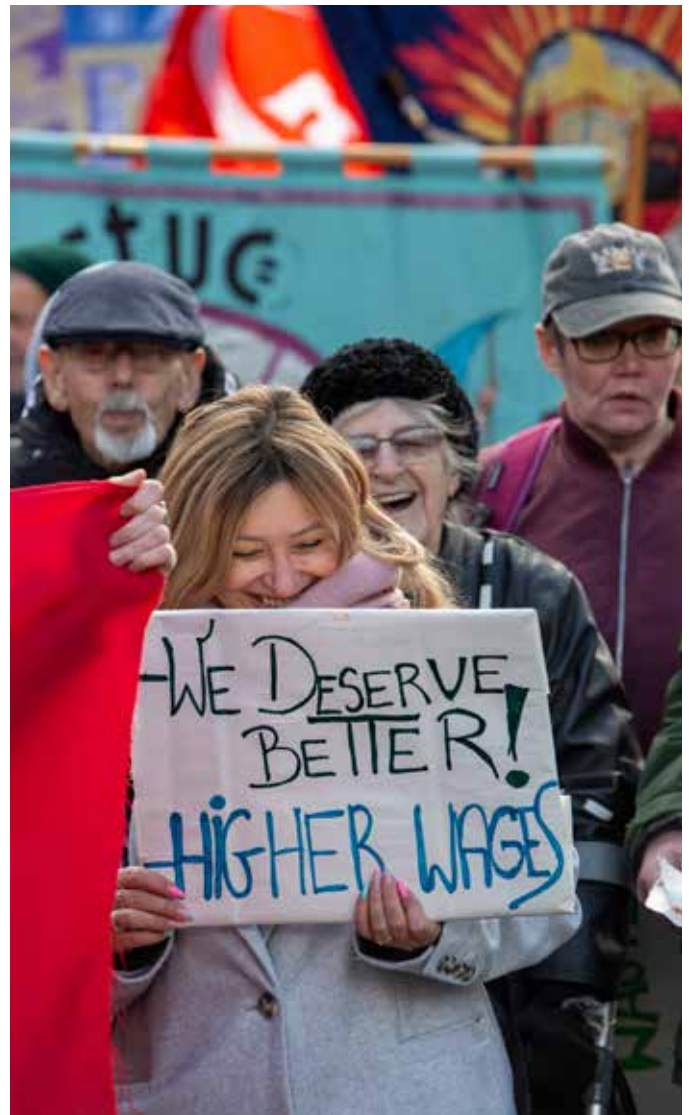
After all, as the campaign recognised, the causes, impacts and the actions we need to address climate and poverty are inextricably linked in many ways.

Firstly, due to the root causes of the crises. The same systems that drive people into financial distress are driving climate breakdown, and both are rooted in an economy that isn't working for people and the planet. Climate change is disproportionately caused by the wealthiest. Oxfam research shows that globally, the richest 1% emit as much pollution in minutes as two-thirds of humanity do in a year. In Scotland, Future Economy Scotland research has found that the richest 5% of households emit four times more than the poorest 5%.

Secondly, based on the way climate impacts are experienced. Poverty is being exacerbated by climate change and people are missing out on the warmer homes, secure jobs and better health that effective climate action should bring. Climate change hits the poorest the hardest, both globally and in Scotland. Areas with high deprivation often overlap with areas vulnerable to flood and heat risks, as highlighted through the Climate Ready Clyde project. Unabated climate change will have increasingly dramatic effects on inequality, poverty and economic opportunity, exacerbating existing gaps and forcing more people into poverty.

Finally, based on the solutions we need. We cannot replicate the mistakes of the past, which have resulted in our deeply unequal society, through climate actions that don't benefit and support the most vulnerable or make the biggest polluters pay more. Action that tackles all of the biggest polluting sectors can also make our lives materially better and easier: making homes warmer and less expensive to heat, providing cheaper and more accessible public transport and giving access to local, sustainable, healthy food. Fair action is also critical for maintaining the broad – yet fragile – public support for climate policies. Climate

Outreach research shows that two thirds of people in Scotland want to be ambitious in our response to the climate crisis, but this is at risk unless action is fair in practice and perception. If people feel the transition is being done to them rather than with them – and that its costs and benefits are unfairly distributed – public support will erode, the success of the transition will be jeopardised and divisions will only increase.







While these seem like no-brainers, these issues are too often pitted against each other, as if it's a choice between tackling poverty and addressing the climate crisis.

Scotland Demands Better gave us the opportunity to show that action on social justice and climate justice must go hand in hand. And whilst the Scottish Government's new Climate Change Plan appears to recognise this, its positive rhetoric on the need for a just transition isn't matched with the transformative actions needed or the detail on how this will actually be delivered.

With the 2026 elections on the horizon and the increasing division and misinformation we're witnessing, it's essential that we continue to come together to present a positive vision of the better world that is possible.

To build more resilient societies and protect most people there must be a society-wide vision for climate action that is steeped in tackling existing and future inequalities. We need a national shared purpose, a mission that we are all challenged to help deliver. But this is impossible if we don't trust each other's motives, lack empathy for those most affected or feel excluded from the benefits of change or having a voice in that transformation.

SCCS will continue working with poverty campaigners to highlight the links between environmental and social justice and advocating for policies that address both. In particular, we will be focusing on how to fairly raise the funds needed for climate action and to reduce poverty, and highlighting that the longer we wait to invest, the more it will cost in the long term.

By deepening the connections between everyone fighting for a better world we can present a clear vision of a fairer future and shift the narrative so that it's not the poorest, most marginalised people in society who are blamed for what's going wrong, and the wealthiest pay their fair share. It's not tweaks that we need. These crises require strong leadership and deep structural changes to address them in a meaningful way. And that requires changes to the way we work too, breaking down barriers and acting as more of a movement than just individuals or organisations. With more and more financial pressures on charities and many losing campaigners and movement-building capacity, it makes sense to share resources to help make our impact much more than the sum of our parts.

The Scotland Demands Better march was a powerful moment, and it's essential we build on that and use the momentum to drive meaningful change, deepen solidarity and reinforce first-hand what surveys are telling us but much of the current media and political narrative denies – that people want strong and decisive efforts that will create a safer, healthier and cleaner world for everyone.

A photograph of three women in the foreground, smiling and looking towards the right. They are holding a white banner. In the background, other people and a red sign with white text are visible. The sign has the words 'SCOTTISH CHURCHES' and 'DEMAND' visible.

Hope. Solidarity. Action.

I am sharing my thoughts and reflections on the Scotland Demands Better campaign, which culminated with a march in our nation's capital in October this year.

*Dale Todd, Managing Director, Courtyard Pantry
Enterprise SCIO*

One of the first things I did when setting up our charity in 2022 was to join the Poverty Alliance. If we were serious about tackling poverty in our communities, I knew we needed to get involved with the Alliance's work, learn from them, and work collectively with other members. Since then, the work of The Poverty Alliance and its members has achieved several notable successes, including the introduction of the Scottish Child Payment and, in recent days, the abolition of the two-child benefit limit.

However, despite these wins, conditions continue to worsen. Our politicians have run out of ideas. Out of this political stagnation, the Scotland Demands Better campaign emerged.

When the campaign was launched, I was hopeful but nervous. How would it connect with the broader public beyond the usual anti-poverty circles? How would we mobilise? Would people come out? And what if it rained! Despite the enormous challenge facing The Poverty Alliance and its members, for the first time in a long while, I started to feel a bit of hope.

The day arrived. After checking the weather forecast, I headed into Glasgow city centre to catch the bus, which was provided by a local trade union that had generously offered me a spot. On the way to Edinburgh, I struck up a conversation with a young apprentice. He told me he had to take on an extra job on weekends just to make ends meet, to pay his bills and rent. Shocking but sadly not surprising. Having a job today no longer guarantees a decent standard of living for many.

When I arrived in Edinburgh, I stepped off the bus onto the steps of the Scottish Parliament into bright sunshine and a sea of colour. There was a real buzz of energy and anticipation for what was to come. I had the honour of holding up The Poverty Alliance banner at the front of

the march, partly to recognise my own contribution to the campaign, I'm sure, but mainly because Peter couldn't find the person who was supposed to do it!

We started up the Royal Mile, chanting 'Whose Streets? Our Streets!' through a megaphone. Folk cheered us from the sidelines. A couple of guys joined me at the front, drinking cans of cider. They explained they were both homeless and had been looking forward to the march for a while. Walking together, I asked one of the men what 'better' looked like for him. He got emotional and silent, seemingly overwhelmed by what a better life might be. I wished him well, and he headed up toward the Meadows, where the march would end.

Once I reached the Meadows, I found a spot and turned to watch the rest of the crowd arrive—wave after wave of colour, sound, flags, and banners. It was a beautiful sight. I felt joyful.

Then, we were treated to amazing music by Declan Walsh, Bemz, and Colonel Mustard and the Dijon 5. I especially like Bemz, a Nigerian-born rapper who lived in London for a while before settling in Stranraer. His set was a raucous affair.

Between acts, I listened closely to various speakers—from the kind, comforting words of Reverend Rose Frew of the Church of Scotland, to the passionate voice of Sai Viswanathan from NUS Scotland—all of whom emphasised the same message: Scotland Demands Better. Roz Foyer and Darren McGarvey wrapped up the event with sobering words, proclaiming that if our leaders don't listen and act to improve our living conditions, things will get much, much worse.

On the bus ride home, I felt hopeful. I had seen the best in humanity, and I realised this was the kind of country I wanted to live in. At the end of the day, we all want to be treated with respect, have a roof over our heads, care for our loved ones, and have a little money to enjoy life's good things. It's not too much to ask, is it?



Standing Together for a Fairer Scotland

and updates on methodological changes

*Dalia Impiglia, Human Rights & Advocacy Coordinator,
Maryhill Integration Network*

Maryhill Integration Network (MIN) is proud to stand alongside the Poverty Alliance as a partner committed to building a Scotland that is fair, dignified, and just for all. At MIN, we celebrate multiculturalism, community, and solidarity by working with people seeking asylum, refugees, and the wider local community through advice services, counselling, community-building activities, and creative programmes and campaigning.

So, when the Scotland Demands Better campaign set out its call for fair wages, fair housing, and fair treatment, we knew we had to support and take part. We joined the march and rally in Edinburgh with members of MIN Voices, our peer-support and advocacy group for people with lived experience of the asylum process in the UK. The campaign's demands reflected the very issues we speak about every week during our group meetings, and the injustices they experience daily.

One of the campaign's central demands is better jobs for all, with fair conditions and wages that meet the cost of living, that aligns directly with our long-standing support for the Lift the Ban campaign. People seeking asylum in the UK are vastly denied the right to work under the current legislation, regardless of their skills, qualifications, or previous careers. Many wait years in uncertainty, unable to support themselves or contribute to the community in ways they are eager to do.

Lift the Ban calls for a simple, humane, and economically sound policy that can allow people seeking asylum to work after a short waiting period. This would support mental health, reduce vulnerability to exploitation, and enable

people to use their talents in ways that benefit Scotland. Other European countries already do this and see thriving communities, stronger economies, and greater social cohesion as a result.

MIN Voices members express that being granted the right to work will contribute to maintaining dignity, building one's future, building financial stability and contribution to the state through paying tax. Denying people the right to work harms their wellbeing and wastes the valuable skills they bring with them.

Economically speaking, lifting the ban could also save taxpayers hundreds of millions annually and generate over a billion pounds in GDP. Socially, it would foster healthier, more connected communities. Most importantly, it would restore dignity and agency to thousands of people rebuilding their lives.

The campaign's second demand for better investment in housing, public transport and strong public services is one that also echoes through many of MIN Voices' advocacy sessions. Too many people in the asylum process face years of uncertainty in hotel accommodation - a tool for private profit for private companies such as the Mears Group. These environments often resemble detention more than dignified living spaces as people are isolated in remote areas, expected to survive on £9 a week, and left waiting on average 1 - 3 years for decisions.

Access to safe, affordable housing and accessible transport that allows people to engage in society should be universal rights. Yet 54% of households in temporary accommodation in Scotland are newly recognised refugees.

Many people who finally receive refugee status fall through the cracks, moving from one inadequate system into another without proper support. The housing crisis affects us all, but it affects people seeking sanctuary with particular severity, often making them targets for misinformation, hostility, and increasingly far-right protests.

These tensions highlight why investment in fair systems matters. Housing should not be used to divide people or fuel fear. It should be a foundation for rebuilding lives. Access to work should not be a privilege, but a medium that strengthens the individual, the local community they are a part of, and the state.

Every week, MIN Voices members speak about wanting to work, be active neighbours, and participate fully in Scottish society. Yet they remain restricted by policies that are designed to keep people dependent and socially isolated.

As one of our MIN Voices members, Thekla, shared as she marched: “I am marching for a better future. It helps stepping up for what is right and being a voice for those who cannot. We need more of these marches around Glasgow.”

Reflecting on the rally, she added: “There were a lot of people supporting us there.”

That sense of solidarity amassed by thousands of people standing together, recognising shared struggles and shared hopes was powerful. In a moment where many face rising costs of living and increasing hardship, the march reminded us that our similarities far outweigh our differences.

It was a moment that we must remember to counteract the rise in far-right demonstrations and racial harassment around asylum accommodation we are witnessing in Scotland. These movements thrive on fear - fear of difference, fear of scarcity, and fear amplified by misinformation. Public anger about poverty or strained public services is being tactfully redirected toward the most marginalised by media and populist politicians rather than toward the systems and policies that create such inequality.

The rise in hostility shows the urgent need to build spaces for understanding, conversation, and compassion. After marching together, it became clear that the demands of Scotland Demands Better are not the demands of one group or another but shared hopes for a fairer society.

We are living in a time of rising homelessness, poverty, and social division. When governments or media direct blame at migrants, refugees, or other marginalised groups, they distract from the real causes: unjust systems, inequitable policies, and concentrated wealth. Our task, collectively, is to reclaim the narrative and to challenge misinformation, to tell human stories, and to build communities where solidarity replaces fear.

For almost 25 years, MIN has worked to uphold human rights, challenge harmful narratives, and amplify the voices of people with lived experience of migration. And we will continue doing this through advocacy, creativity, community, and solidarity with our partners across Scotland.

The march in Edinburgh showed us that fairer Scotland is one where everyone — local residents and New Scots — can participate fully and live free from discrimination. It is a Scotland that celebrates multiculturalism and strengthens community.

A Scotland that is better for people seeking asylum is a Scotland that is better for all.





Scotland's Children Demand Better

*Martin Canavan, Head of Policy and Participation,
Aberlour*

At Aberlour Children's Charity our mission is to beat poverty, disadvantage and discrimination.

More than 1 in 5 children in Scotland continue to live in poverty – that is simply unacceptable.

It is shameful that in a country as wealthy as ours, children still grow up and live in poverty. We can and must do better.

Ahead of next year's Scottish elections we are urging all political parties and politicians to commit to going further and faster to tackle poverty.

We must see real and meaningful progress on ending child poverty for good.

The next Scottish Parliament must be the parliament where we prioritise ending child poverty above all else. Scotland must move from managing poverty to preventing it.

At Aberlour, our children, young people and families are clear that they want our politicians to prioritise ending poverty.

They tell us they think there should be more financial support for families as cost-of-living pressures bite ever harder.

They tell us they believe there should be more available help and support for families in their communities. They tell us that they feel there should be much more that they can get from their education to set them up for the future.

That is why we have chosen to stand with all those across Scotland who demand lasting change where poverty no longer diminishes the life chances of our children.

That is why Aberlour supports Scotland Demands Better.

This year Aberlour celebrates its 150th anniversary. In 1875, when Aberlour was established as an orphanage in Moray in the northeast of Scotland, our primary purpose included feeding hungry bairns.

So, it is sad to see that a century and a half later we are still in the business of feeding hungry bairns.

That is why we have been compelled to campaign in recent years to see an end to school meal debt and hidden school hunger.

That school meal debt even exists and that children regularly go hungry at school should shame us as a society.

That is just one illustration of how Scotland's poorest children and families have been failed by successive governments both north and south of the border.

At Aberlour, we do all we can do to tackle child poverty. Too often it feels like we are applying a sticking plaster to a gaping wound. That is because ending child poverty is a political choice.

Children do not choose to grow up in poverty, but governments make choices that either improve people's lives or don't.

The time is long overdue for us to move beyond incremental shifts at best, and sound bites at worst. Resources haven't followed key promises, and many of those promises have been made and broken to children who have only known uncertainty and broken promises.

Lifting people out of poverty and destitution benefits us all. The evidence could not be clearer.

So now is the time to make that choice: to choose to end child poverty.

If not now, when?

It is true that there are some recent signs that things are finally beginning to change.

The latest child poverty figures for Scotland showed a slight reduction in child poverty for the first time since 2012.

This has shown that the Scottish Child Payment in particular, as the key mechanism to put more money in low-income families' pockets, is having an impact.

Even still, however, child poverty figures are not reducing nearly far or fast enough to keep us on track to reach our legally binding child poverty targets by 2030.

The recent announcement by the UK Government that they will finally end the cruel two-child limit for good is significant.

This should result in the single biggest reduction in child poverty in the UK in nearly two decades.

And while this is encouraging, it doesn't get away from the fact that our most disadvantaged children and families need our help urgently.

At Aberlour, what we see every day are parents absolutely trying to do the best they possibly can.

But they find themselves in intolerable situations – situations which anyone would find equally intolerable.

When you cannot feed your children or have to choose between providing a meal for them or for you.

When you must send them to school in uniforms that are too small or in ill-fitting shoes, or even not to send them at all out of a sense of shame.

The level of stress that creates in families is really significant.

There are actions that government can take now to help improve the lives of so many families.

That must also include each government in Holyrood and Westminster getting beyond political differences to work together to do just that.

Each government must commit to working together to achieve their stated and shared ambition to end child poverty.

Then we would begin to see some progress that would make a real and sustainable difference in the lives of our poorest children and families.

One area Aberlour believes both governments must take action to help and support struggling families is by tackling public debt.

Low-income families across the UK are in the midst of a public debt crisis.

Overwhelmingly our evidence shows that public debt, such as council tax arrears, rent, and even school meal debt, is trapping families in an unbreakable cycle of poverty. Our research has made clear that public debt is a key contributor to levels of child poverty.

Data from Citizens Advice Scotland shows that around 50% of debt owed by low-income families using their debt advice services is public debt.

We also know that women, and in particular single parents and women living in disabled households, are disproportionately more likely to be impacted by public debt. Families already disadvantaged because they're on the breadline are doubly disadvantaged because they're getting automatic removals from their income before it hits the bank. Families whose income already fails to meet their needs or allows them to provide the essentials for their children. These debts then trap families in poverty.

If we're serious about tackling child poverty, then we must be equally committed to tackling public debt. We need a plan to tackle the public debt crisis faced by low-income families.

That means not reducing families already inadequate household budgets further through deductions and debt recovery.

This isn't just about putting more money in families' pockets but must mean keeping money in families' pockets for the things that they need for their children to thrive.

Scotland Demands Better demand for better social security is clear and achieving this will help both put and keep money in families' pockets for life's essentials.

So our call for all politicians and political parties, as we look towards a new Scottish Parliament in 2026, is to say now is the time for the urgent change we need to help families now and to lift and keep children out of poverty for good. At Aberlour our message is loud and clear.

Scotland must no longer be a country where our bairns go hungry.

Scotland must no longer be a country where children are trapped in poverty due to the political choices we make. Scotland's children demand better.



The louder the voices, the harder we are to ignore!

Linda Craik, End Poverty Edinburgh

I am a full-time unpaid carer for two family members. When I cast my vote in elections, I thought I was choosing people whose values were like my own – but it turns out I was very wrong!

The Scotland Demands Better march is for ordinary people to reinforce the message of what the people of Scotland need ... and what we deserve:

- We deserve better working conditions and wages
- We deserve affordable homes, with enough money to pay the bills, to eat and to have life essentials
- And we deserve access to support services that will help us to thrive.

The demands we are making are not extreme or unachievable – they are just things that everyone in our country has a basic human right to expect. And they are most definitely achievable with the right political will.

We are not asking for a handout – just a hand up to ensure a decent quality of life.

For the last five years I've been a member of a citizen's group called End Poverty Edinburgh. We're a small group of normal people from different backgrounds who have all, in one way or another, experienced poverty in our lives.

Myself, well I was in paid employment from leaving school until I became a carer nine years ago.

As a carer, the main sources of advice and support that I have been able to access has come from voluntary sector organisations (thank you VOCAL and Citizens Advice Scotland!) – but they are just not able to help everyone who needs it, due to the lack of funding from local and central governments. This has to change!

These are lifeline organisations, not just for carers, and without them even more people will be left to struggle and flounder.

I am only one of more than 800,000 unpaid carers in Scotland and it is estimated that we save the economy about £15 billion per year – but when only receiving £83.30 per week Carers Support Payment, you can very quickly fall into the poverty cycle and feel like you are invisible or a problem that no-one wants to deal with.

And on top of dealing with your own personal, daily struggles, you have to cope with the judgement and stigma that comes with living in poverty.

If those in power were to meet our demands then huge numbers of people, not just carers, would be lifted out of poverty and could make meaningful contributions to their communities, their cities, and Scotland as a whole.

Campaigning is a bit like a last resort for myself, and others: to be heard by those who hold the power and the purse strings, to tell them to stop thinking of those living in poverty as 'a problem' because we most definitely are NOT! We are part of the solution!

I would encourage you all to keep up the momentum of this campaign, because the louder the voices, the harder we are to ignore!

Thank you for being here today, and please remember that Scotland belongs to all of us - and the Scotland Demands Better campaign doesn't end today – this is just the beginning!

SCOTLAND

DEMANDS

BETTER

THE MARCH FOR A BETTER SCOTLAND
BEYOND THE INJUSTICE OF POVERTY

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