

Understanding business perspectives on poverty

Whilst there is increasing recognition among policy makers in Scotland that businesses have a role to play in addressing poverty, it remains unclear what scope businesses themselves see for getting involved in this agenda. A clearer understanding of what makes a good 'anti-poverty initiative' as far as businesses are concerned is needed.

The aim of this research, undertaken by the New Policy Institute (NPI) and the Poverty Alliance, is to explore this question with businesses themselves and to promote engagement between businesses and policy makers on matters to do with poverty. The research is supported by SSE and the Scottish Government.

How can a business get involved in this project?

In all, we are looking to conduct 20 interviews over the next two months. We will be talking to a range of businesses, large and small, across a range of sectors. Our focus is on poverty but we recognise – indeed, it is one of the topics we wish to explore – that many businesses doubt it is relevant to them, at least as far as their employees are concerned. We are approaching employers who pay the Living Wage or who are involved in other initiatives (e.g. the Edinburgh Jobs Guarantee) but would be pleased to hear from others too. In principle, relevant 'anti-poverty' initiatives might cover a range of workplace practices, including pay but also hours, training, flexibility, childcare. We are also interested in business actions in the community such as work experience schemes directed at disadvantaged groups.

What does the interview involve?

We will arrange a convenient time for a researcher (either Peter Kenway, director of NPI or Peter Kelly, director of the Poverty Alliance) to meet with you to discuss the topics outlined below. If you prefer, we can conduct the interview over the phone.

The interview, which will take no more than one hour, will cover the following:

- The different ways that businesses can improve the position of low-income households in Scotland;
- Your involvement in different initiatives;
- The best way to engage businesses; and
- How the government can support business actions against poverty

We will take notes during the interview and our findings will be written up in the form of a publicly available report. In that report, we will not directly attribute any comments unless we have been granted permission to do so. We would like to acknowledge all those we have spoken to but, again, if any interviewee or business prefers to remain anonymous then that would be fine.

If as an employer in Scotland you would like to take part in this research, whether by being interviewed or in any other way, or you would like more information about it, please get in touch: ceri.hughes@npi.org.uk / 0207 613 5397.