# FAIRNESS COMMISSIONS
## FROM SHETLAND TO SOUTHAMPTON

### The Role of Fairness Commissions in the Enabling State
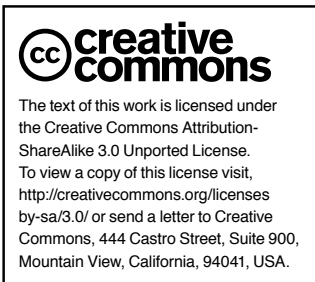
**Gail Irvine**

# Acknowledgments

**Enabling Wellbeing**

**Policy**

**Fairness Commissions**    2017

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# Foreword

When I was asked to Chair the Fairer Fife Commission in 2014, I was pleased to contribute to this initiative, which was born from the vision of both the Convenor and Chief Executive of Fife Council. Similar initiative and resourcefulness was apparent from all civic leaders involved in establishing Fairness Commissions.

The Fife Commission proved to have many features of the Enabling State, a concept that describes a shift in the way public services are both conceived and delivered. This shift is characterised by the recognition that traditional 'top-down' approaches are no longer sufficient to deliver increases in civic wellbeing in the 21st century. The progressive state – local government in this case – has to develop a more facilitative and enabling role that empowers individuals and communities, and draws on other sectors to rise to the challenges of inequality and poverty in their area.

While we were clear that our Commission had to be rooted in the realities of Fife and the lived experience of its citizens, we were informed and enriched by our careful study of other trailblazing Fairness Commissions from across Great Britain. Their rich, detailed reports held up a mirror to our own community and helped us deepen our understanding of the possible.

When we organised a round table bringing together Fairness Commissions from around Great Britain, our key objective was to create a forum to encourage this form of evidence exchange and continual learning. Based outside London and with a responsibility that spreads across the UK and the Republic of Ireland, the Trust values our position to reflect on the ever-increasing possibilities for cross-jurisdictional learning that devolution has delivered.

We have often found that looking to our closest neighbours doesn't come naturally for the jurisdictions of the UK, but we

were deeply impressed by the appetite for learning shown by our roundtable participants. Our Fairness Commission representatives from England, Scotland and Wales informed this paper with frank and insightful discussion on the successes and challenges of their Commissions, as well as the process of change. We heard that Fairness Commissions can energise their area and mobilise productive, local relationships behind the optimistic view that ever-widening inequality is neither natural nor inevitable. That local action can make a very significant difference. But participants were also ready to reflect candidly on the more difficult job of moving from recommendations to implementing change. They actively sought insights from their counterparts about what might be done better. There was a particular desire to hear about approaches taken by Commissions who had managed to engage with the hardest to reach voices in their communities.

While it is early days to measure the impact of Fairness Commissions, we hope this discussion paper provides a snapshot of the model's potential to enable a process of change. On a practical level, we hope it will inform those thinking about setting up a Fairness Commission of the challenges they might face, whilst inspiring action by setting out the prize of getting it right. Finally, we hope it will stimulate greater interest in sharing policy and evidence across the jurisdictions of the UK and Ireland, to design and deliver better outcomes for all citizens.
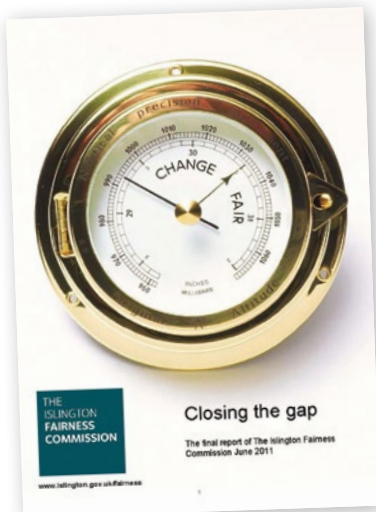
**Martyn Evans**
Chief Executive, Carnegie UK Trust

# Introduction

The Carnegie UK Trust first became involved in Fairness Commissions in 2014 when Chief Executive Martyn Evans was invited to Chair the **Fairer Fife Commission**. Through this process we developed a deeper understanding of the work of a number of similar Commissions existing around Great Britain. We saw in these Commissions – numbering over 20 in England, seven in Scotland and one in Wales[1] – potential synergies with our own work on the **Enabling State,** as well as an untapped opportunity for cross-jurisdictional learning.

In February 2017, we convened a roundtable discussion with representatives from Fairness Commissions across Great Britain to reflect on their experiences, and consider the potential benefits of greater collaboration between different Commissions for more effective policy interventions. The round table was held in Newcastle, in partnership with Professor Mark Shucksmith, Director of the Institute for Social Renewal at Newcastle University. Participants included representatives from Fairness Commissions as far afield as Shetland and Southampton, as well as policy stakeholders operating at a national level. A variety of perspectives were represented, from the very first Fairness Commission, Islington, to one yet to hold its first meeting, North Lanarkshire. A full list of participating organisations is provided in Appendix 2.

THE ISLINGTON FAIRNESS COMMISSION

**Closing the gap**

The final report of The Islington Fairness Commission June 2011

www.islington.gov.uk/fairness

Left: © London Borough of Islington

1   Please see Appendix 1 for a list of similar Commissions we have identified across England, Scotland and Wales. We have been unable to identify any similar Commissions in Northern Ireland.

# Roundtable discussion

**The roundtable asked participants to consider in particular:**

- How do you measure the impact of Fairness Commissions?
- What are the biggest challenges to implementation?
- What works best about the Fairness Commissions model?

This paper reflects on the key points arising from the roundtable discussion that took place. It also sets out the Carnegie UK Trust's view of the potential of the Fairness Commissions model for social change in the context of our Enabling State vision.

Top: © Carnegie UK Trust

Bottom: © Croydon Opportunity and Fairness Commission, design by Martin Huxley

# 1. What are Fairness Commissions?

In recent years, a number of local authority areas across Great Britain have established Fairness Commissions to develop policy recommendations which are designed to tackle the impact of poverty and inequality at a local level.

The scope of the issues examined by the Commissions has been wide and varied, encompassing the cost of living; housing; access to jobs, education and training; childcare; digital connectivity; infrastructure; access to services and social security, and health and social care. While the focus and scope of Commissions have varied, at times reflected in different names such as Poverty, Inequality or Social Inclusion Commissions, all have taken as their starting point a conviction that ever-widening inequality is neither natural nor intractable.[2]

The Commissions have generally operated by bringing together a cross-sectoral group of senior local representatives to hear detailed evidence on particular issues and produce policy recommendations. The majority have been instigated and supported by local authorities, while the Commissioners themselves usually reflect a balance of public, private, charity, academic and community interests. It is worth noting that for the purposes of our roundtable discussion and this report, we did not include the various Poverty Truth Commissions[3] in our analysis. This decision came from our sense that the model and objective of the Poverty Truth

2   For an in-depth study of the approaches taken by different Fairness Commissions in England and Wales, please see Bunyan, P and Diamond, J, *Agency in Austerity: A Study of Fairness Commissions as an Approach to Reducing Inequality in the UK;* Webb Memorial Trust; online 2014. https://repository.edgehill.ac.uk/6054/1/Agency_in_Austerity_-_Fairness_Commission_Report.pdf [accessed Sept 2016] and Lyall, S, *Fairness Commissions: Understanding how Local Governments can have an Impact on Inequality and Poverty*; New Economics Foundation; online 2015 http://neweconomics.org/2015/07/fairness-commissions/ [accessed Sept 2017]

3   At the time of writing, we are aware of Scotland's Poverty Truth Commission, Leeds Poverty Truth Commission, West Cheshire Poverty Truth Commission, Salford Poverty Truth Commission, and Wolverhampton Poverty Truth Commission

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Commissions, with their focus on testimony, capacity building, and connecting the expertise of marginalised individuals with decision-makers, is distinct from the cross-sectoral partnership working, closeness to local power structures and thematic scope that characterise most Fairness Commissions. However, we believe there are aspects of the Poverty Truth Commission process which Fairness Commissions could learn from, a point we return to in Section 2.4 of this report.

# The Enabling State

The shift towards the Enabling State recognises that traditional 'top-down' public service approaches cannot meet the complex social problems that we face as a society. The Welfare State has served many of us well, but has shown limited capability to solve the most intractable and 'wicked' issues facing the very worst-off in our society, or to respond to our more complex needs and wants. Moreover, there is clear evidence that people wish to be in control of their own lives, and that this sense of control is a critical, undervalued component in wellbeing. The shift toward the Enabling State will see the state continue to provide the public services it excels at alongside new, more responsive forms of working which seek to empower individuals and communities. The inter-related shifts that characterise the move towards the Enabling State can be observed across the UK, Ireland and many other OECD countries. We set out these shifts below and we will return to them throughout this report as we evaluate the effectiveness of the Fairness Commission model.

**Policy Shifts from Welfare State to Enabling State[4]**



- From target setting to outcomes
- From top-down to bottom-up
- From representation to participation
- From silos to working together
- From crisis management to prevention
- From doing-to to doing with
- From state to the third sector

4   Wallace, J, *The Rise of the Enabling State,* Dunfermline: Carnegie UK Trust 2013

# 2. Fairness Commissions – an Enabling Approach?

**In theory, the Fairness Commission model appears to align with many of the policy shifts present in the move towards an Enabling State.**

Our roundtable discussion provided an insight of the extent to which the promise of Fairness Commission as a more enabling approach to local governance has been fulfilled in practice. The key points from the roundtable discussion in relation to each of the seven shifts are described below.

## 2.1 From target setting to outcomes

The Enabling State prioritises measurement of outcomes as a more meaningful indicator of social progress than inputs or targets. On a macro level, Fairness Commissions propose the ambitious outcome of a fairer, more equal local society. Appropriate monitoring and evaluation frameworks are clearly essential in tracking progress towards this goal and understanding when and if new ways of working are effective, although the goals set by individual

Commissions are not exclusively outcome-focused and represent a mix of targets, outputs and outcomes. Indeed, at the point of issuing recommendations, many Commissions do not prescribe the methods by which these recommendations will be progressed and measured. Those that propose outcome measurement frameworks do so in varying levels of detail, as we set out below in the examples of Fife, Southampton, and Sheffield Fairness Commissions.



Right: © Toynbee Hall, March 2016

## Examples of goals set by Fairness Commissions

**Fairer Fife[4]**

**Outcome:** Fife to be in the top five Scottish local authorities for numbers of people involved in volunteering.

**Suggested measure:** 35,494 more people are volunteering

**Southampton Fairness Commission[5]**

**Outcome:** Local skills shortages are addressed effectively.

**Suggested measure:**

- Number of interventions / number of people accessing intervention
- Outcomes of those accessing interventions
- Reduction in long-term unemployment
- Reduction in our of work benefit claimants

**Sheffield Fairness Commission[6]**

We will know Sheffield is becoming a fairer city when the following outcomes improve [...]

**Life Expectancy**

- The life expectancy gap between different parts of the City is reduced.
- Healthy life expectancy rises among all groups [...]

4 *Fairness Matters: The Fairer Fife Commission*, Fife: Fife Council 2015, https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/fairness-matters/

5 *A Fairer Southampton*, Southampton Fairness Commission, online 2015 http://spectrumcil.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Fairness-Commission-Report.pdf [accessed September 2016]

6 *Fairness: Making Sheffield Fairer,* Sheffield Fairness Commission; online 2013 https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/content/dam/sheffield/docs/your-city-council/our-plans,-policies-and-performance/Fairness%20Commission%20Report.pdf [accessed September 2016]

While the shift towards outcomes is characteristic of the Enabling State, there is recognition that this approach presents challenges in terms of resource planning and attributing change. This is highly relevant given the collaborative nature of the Fairness Commissions model, in which the outcomes many Commissions are working towards require input from a range of local and national stakeholders. The greater impact that Commissions can exert by pursuing these types of shared outcomes was highlighted frequently by roundtable participants, but a trade-off was recognised in that attributing change is more complex and accountability fragmented.

Given that Fairness Commissions in Great Britain have taken different approaches to implementation and are at different stages of development, it is often too early to effectively assess what tangible impact they have made in reducing poverty and inequality in their localities. However, a range of views were expressed by roundtable participants as to how Fairness Commissions might gain a measure of their progress in the short term.

While the act of monitoring itself was considered important to mobilise action, it was felt that too much time spent setting up complicated models of measurement was unhelpful. Participants felt a sensible approach selected two or three key headlines indicators to gain a sense of whether the direction of travel was positive. Many participants also favoured a more prominent use of case studies, or 'stories', alongside data as evidence of change. The importance of these case studies in helping policy-makers to understand people's lived experience and the aggregate impact of individual policy decisions was stressed.

Another view was that Fairness Commission recommendations should not be seen as an exhaustible 'to do' list or blueprint to be exactingly followed, but should be taken as a stimulus and inspiration for further action, inviting new ideas and embracing existing local initiatives.

## What outcome do we want to see?

'Fairness,' 'poverty' and 'inequality' are not interchangeable concepts, and each requires distinctive policy interventions. The politicised nature of these terms was discussed, with many Commissions strategically choosing one or other in order that their message cut through to stakeholders. It was felt broadly that 'fairness' and 'inequality' are terms which resonate with many people, but that the redistributive implications of tackling inequality presents a challenging political and public narrative. On the other hand, the human cost of poverty can mobilise action from across the ideological spectrum, but as a term, it may not resonate with how people think about their communities and their capacity to change them.

It was suggested that a focus on either poverty or inequality could alienate some constituencies of support for the Commission. For some participants this raised the question of whether Fairness Commissions, as an essentially consensus-based practice of policy-making, can marshal the difficult decisions required for systemic social change.

## 2.2 From silos to working together

Partnership-working reflects the cross-cutting nature of many complex social problems and the belief that these are best tackled by the public, private and third sectors working in concert. Roundtable participants were clear about the value of partnership working in Fairness Commissions, feeling the Commission gains its authority, momentum and political purchase through the diversity of its members and supporters. All of the Commissions we have spoken to have operated through cross-sectoral partnerships, and the argument of Fairer Fife – that 'mega communities' must be leveraged in order to drive real impact on fairness – resonated widely.

## What is a mega community?

Today, issues that significantly affect global and national security, economic wellbeing, and the health and safety of citizens around the world have become key challenges to decision-makers in the public sector, private sector, and civil society. At first glance, these problems seem intractable. Such problems cannot be solved by government, business, or civil society alone. It takes a mega community of all three.

(Booz Allen, 2007)



Real impact on fairness

On the other hand, concern was expressed that sometimes the wide range of interests represented on a Commission can lead to a fragmentation of focus and diluted policy recommendations. Tackling the priority issues for most Commissions necessarily requires action from across departments and sectors (encompassing, for example housing, education, children's services, financial advice etc). While a Commission's recommendations can provide a galvanising force for these different groups to work together, there is a risk that if a Commission's work is too broad the key messages may be lost and there may be lack of ownership for driving change.

Moreover, particularly given that many Fairness Commissions were established as a creative response to constrained public sector resources, it was seen as critical that Commissions do not run in parallel to existing local initiatives, but instead are integrated into key decision-making processes. It was suggested that for a Fairness Commission to have sustained impact, its objectives must become organising principles for the work of the local authority and its partners; a strong 'brand' which can become associated with the area and outlive leadership changes.

© Fife Council

## 2.3 From crisis management to prevention

Fairness Commissions are a potent example of local agency, with a variety of actors coming together to hear citizens' voices and prioritise practical initiatives to improve their communities. Yet roundtable participants were clear that in many cases, the initiative for a Fairness Commission came from a sense that extraordinary action was needed to counter what were felt as deficiencies in national or international policy. That poverty has multiple, complex causes and long roots in certain communities

in Britain was not in doubt, while widening economic inequality was also considered a longer-term macroeconomic trend sharpened by the global financial crisis. However, participants considered that the crisis and resulting austerity had most severely affected the interests of the most disadvantaged in society. Fiscal constraint was also felt to have de-prioritised the pursuit of policies at central government level that might lead to progressive distribution of income and wealth. Fairness Commissions were seen to have supported local actors to make fairer decisions of how to dispense resources within

adverse circumstances. However, there was notable discomfort that Commissions might struggle to mitigate the hardship and inequality arising from policy decisions made elsewhere. The tenor of the discussion and of many Fairness Commission reports suggests a wide-placed sense of 'crisis management' at odds with the Enabling State vision.

Our Enabling State analysis has found the cultural shift required to move from crisis management to prevention is significant. Chief among these challenges is the short-termism of reporting and electoral cycles which disincentives policies which will see a longer-term impact. The experiences of many Fairness Commissions seem to confirm this analysis: it was pointed out that those involved in the Fairness Commission can find it difficult to plan for the long term, with many organisations operating through one-year budget cycles. Roundtable participants also highlighted the importance of Commissions being able to demonstrate progress quickly and there was consensus about the need for some 'quick wins' to showcase impact and build momentum.
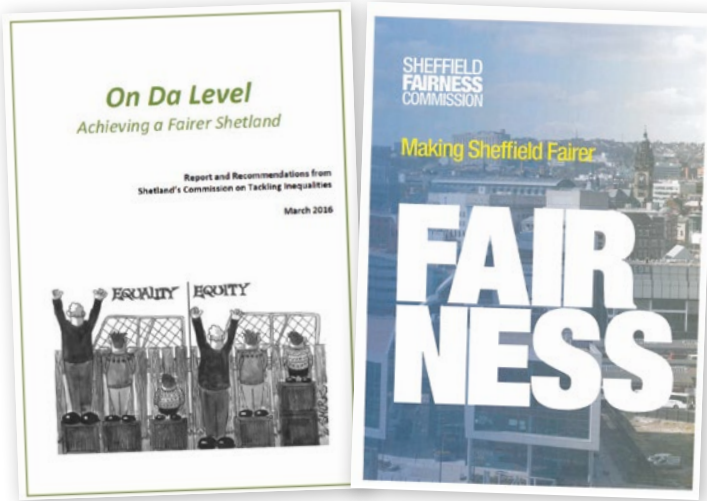
Left: © Smirk

Right: © Sheffield
Fairness Commission

At the same time however, participants noted that resources allocated to such quick wins might reduce the bandwidth available to begin making the incremental change needed for more long-term policy shifts.

On a positive note, the expression 'necessity is the mother of invention' rings true for the experience accounted by many roundtable participants, who felt that Fairness Commissions have gained exceptional traction because of the urgent need felt at the local level 'to do more with less' in the context of significant reductions in funding.

## 2.4 From top-down to bottom up

The local nature of Fairness Commissions appears to align well with a 'bottom-up' approach, which shapes policy decisions around the needs and characteristics of the community. But a 'bottom-up' approach goes beyond localism to provide citizens with a greater opportunity to have their views heard and listened to when it comes to designing policy and services. While all Fairness Commissions included direct outreach and engagement with individual citizens as part of

their evidence-taking process, the breadth and depth of this engagement has inevitably varied quite considerably between different Commissions. It has also been rare for private individuals to serve as Commissioners and so to have had a direct hand in co-producing policy recommendations. Some of our speakers stressed that learning could be drawn from the Poverty Truth Commissions in this respect, whose objective relied on balancing Commissioners with access to levers of power and marginalised individuals with lived experience of poverty. We set out in Section 1 differing objectives between the Poverty Truth Commissions and many Fairness Commissions which may limit the transferability of their approaches. It is worth noting in particular that the Poverty Truth Commissions have generally operated through a longer and more organic lifespan which facilitates the safe, deliberative space arguably required to develop the capacity of marginalised individuals to feel empowered to contribute expertise. On the other hand, roundtable participants provided some examples of excellent bottom-up approaches which had helped progress their Fairness Commission at both testimony gathering and implementation stage. Islington Council, as an example, created a cross-departmental and non-hierarchical reference group of
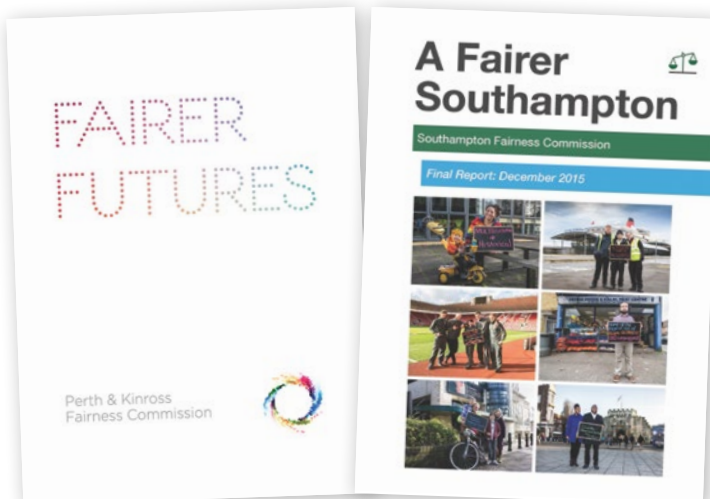


Left: © Perth and Kinross Council

Right: © Southampton Fairness Commission, Design by Megan Glynn

## Power and finding the appropriate levers of change

A challenge of the 'bottom-up' approach is how we amplify successful interventions at the local level so that they might impact and influence national policy. Our roundtable discussion sought to understand how different Commissions balanced setting policy recommendations which can be enacted locally alongside seeking to influence national policy where it was felt the desired social change could only be secured at this level.

Some Commissions deliberately restricted the scope of their inquiry to what could be done locally, so as to focus on practical action they knew could be acted upon and avoid generating a 'wish list' of policies which may not be achieved. Others ascribed local action where practicable but also made recommendations for how national government should prioritise resources to combat poverty and inequality.

individual council employees to organise the priorities and implementation plan of their Commission.

Most roundtable participants were upbeat about their capacity to influence change at a local level, although there was a degree of realism about the disruptive impact of countervailing policies enacted at national and supranational government level. While the impetus for systematic change seems greater when local and central government priorities find themselves aligned, the opportunity for Fairness Commissions to 'test-bed' innovative policy initiatives at a local level was also seen as a strength. For example, Fairer Fife is considering that a Universal Basic Income pilot could be evaluated most successfully at the level of a single town within Fife rather than on a pan-Fife level.

## 2.5 From representation to participation and from 'doing to' to 'doing with'

The Carnegie UK Trust uses the term 'co-production' to mean direct engagement with citizens about the types of services and policies they want to see. There is a compelling argument that the individuals most impacted by poverty need to be mobilised to share their experiences and insight if we are to design effective anti-poverty measures. On the other hand, there is clearly a balance to be struck in seeking out expert input from Commissioners and influential stakeholders, and amplifying the views of citizens.

Roundtable participants perceived this as a 'trade off' between mobilising existing levers of power, and seeking to build up the capacity of individuals to engage in the policy-making process. These are not irreconcilable positions, but how this balance is struck may influence the Commission towards different outcomes. The latter approach may be critical in building ownership among the community, but may

have limited impact on other centres of power. A stronger emphasis towards the former was considered necessary if Commissions are to move from describing the problem towards gaining political follow-through and lasting impact.

In our discussion, while participants recognised the significant risks of co-production appearing tokenistic or insincere, they felt strongly about its importance. Their direct engagements with citizens had brought insight, colour, vital new perspectives and urgency to the recommendations and solidified many Commissioners' commitment to the process.

A legacy of Fairness Commissions may be an increased number of local leaders with an understanding and willingness to campaign about poverty and inequality. Participants made clear that wider sharing across Fairness Commissions of approaches which succeeded in reaching 'unheard voices' would constitute particularly valuable learning going forward.

## 2.6 From state to third sector

By third sector, we refer to the range of not-for-profit groups, be they charitable, voluntary or associative, which exist within our communities. This third sector is inevitably represented to a degree[8] among Fairness Commissioners, and is an important partner in delivering many recommendations. However, to date, it has rarely been central to the design or roll-out of the implementation phase. The leading role of local authorities here raises questions about the extent to which the delivery of Fairness Commission recommendations follow enabling practices which may facilitate greater ownership among their intended communities.

Our roundtable discussion highlighted several reasons why local authorities make an appropriate choice for implementation lead – among other factors, their unique democratic accountability to the community and their comparably larger operational resources. A positive view of the leading role of local authorities in Fairness Commissions might be that this exemplifies the convening or 'ensuring'[9] council in action. This role casts local authorities as 'network orchestrators'[10] who create spaces for a diversity of stakeholders to explore and move towards new policy positions. However, it is often suggested that third sector groups have a degree of visibility and trust amongst, and awareness and sensitivity to, the needs and preferences of their communities which may be greater than bodies in the public sector or in central government organisations.

8  Bunyan, P and Diamond, J suggest in *Agency in Austerity* that there is a comparatively lower number of Commissioners representing very local institutions at the level of e.g. faith groups, schools or community groups.

9  O'Brien, P et al, *The Road to 2020: A Manifesto for the Ensuring Council,* APSE; online http://www.apse.org.uk/apse/index.cfm/research/current-research-programme/the-road-to-2020-a-manifesto-for-the-ensuring-council/the-road-to-2020-a-manifesto-for-the-ensuring-council/ 2013 [accessed Feb 2017]

10 Term used in Störmer, P et al,*The Future of Work: Jobs and Skills in 2030*, evidence paper 84 UKCES; online [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/jobs-and-skills-in-2030 [accessed Feb 2017] and cited in Griggs, S, and Wingfield, N, *Working at the Frontline of Austerity: The Ensuring Council and Workforce Planning,* APSE; online 2016 http://ow.ly/8bX6302ccHa [accessed August 2016]

## The role of business

A recurring theme among representatives at our round table was finding successful approaches to mobilise the business community behind Fairness Commissions. Participants were highly conscious of the challenge and prize of securing 'buy in' from the private sector, particularly for acting on employment issues and living standards through such means as implementing a living wage. Common obstacles cited included bypassing corporate 'gatekeepers' in order to engage those key individuals within the business with the authority to act on the aims of the Commission.

There is cause to consider whether the third sector could be better mobilised by Fairness Commissions, particularly at report stage, where their influence might secure greater purchase among the local area and facilitate citizen engagement beyond the Commission's immediate duration.

# Sharing learning

**The diversity of Fairness Commissions provides a vital opportunity for cross-jurisdictional learning about effective policy interventions.**

Better collaboration could facilitate difficult decisions about how best to invest reducing resources at a local level, whilst together considering how to most effectively influence change at a national level.

Our roundtable discussion made clear that many Commissions have sought out informal contacts and consulted with neighbouring Commissions. However, it appears there has been little in the way of more systematic sharing of learning, and also virtually no cross-fertilisation of ideas between the English and Scottish Commissions. In our experience, looking around at our closest neighbours for policy inspiration is not instinctive, and encouraging cross-jurisdictional learning requires sustained effort.[11] We were therefore greatly encouraged by the appetite for comparative learning shown by delegates, and their suggestions of mechanisms through which we might continue to share learning beyond the duration of the discussion. Suggestions included the possibility of constructing an online data-sharing platform, and joining up advocacy activity so that national policy actors and institutes are apprised of initiatives happening at local level.

11  McCormick, J, *Evidence Exchange: Learning from Social Policy Across the UK* Carnegie UK Trust and Joseph Rowntree Foundation; online 2013 https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/evidence-exchange-learning-from-social-policy-from-across-the-uk/ [accessed May 2017] explores this in detail.

# Conclusion

At the close of our round table, the question was raised whether participants would recommend that more localities set up Fairness Commissions.

We consider that there are a number of effective aspects of the Fairness Commissions model which could be studied and adapted by any kind of initiative which seeks to develop more responsive policies.

That said, our discussion revealed a number of strategic and operational tensions or 'trade-offs' within the Commissions model, some of which we set out for consideration below. Anyone thinking about setting up a Fairness Commission or similar initiative should consider how they might best reconcile these tensions to advance their objectives. Many of these tensions reflect the challenges of the shift towards an Enabling State.

A focus on outcomes, partnership-working, and a willingness to learn and build alliances across different sectors and jurisdictions are key components of an Enabling State. The kind of change that an Enabling State might deliver may be iterative and require sustained effort to progress. But the prize is a genuinely embedded shift in practice, and a commitment to action owned across many centres of power. The scale of the ambitions set out by Fairness Commissions seems to demand a shift of this nature.

The experience of Commissions helps to illustrate some of the challenges involved in the Enabling State shift to more bottom-up, participatory approaches. The difficulty of balancing the need to anchor the Fairness Commission around the 'expert' views of local representatives with the imperative of engaging closely with citizens to design effective, compassionate policies is not underestimated. Achieving a

**Balancing the scales**

| | |
|---:|:---|
| **Prevention** ⚖ | **Mitigation** |
| **Short-term** ⚖ | **Long-term** |
| **Consensus based** ⚖ | **Creative tension** |
| **Working together** ⚖ | **Diffusion of responsibility** |
| **Local authority-led** ⚖ | **Wider ownership** |
| **Micro/Local focus** ⚖ | **Macro/National change** |
| **Expert opinion** ⚖ | **Lived experience** |
| **Influential supporters** ⚖ | **Empowered citizens** |

satisfactory balance which is seen to meaningfully build in the voices and wishes of citizens is becoming an increasingly politicised and urgent task. The challenge is how we structure genuinely deliberative exchanges which develop the capacity of citizens to engage with the totality of issues affecting their community. Commissions across Great Britain have trialled different approaches through which this might be achieved.

The Enabling State shift to a more preventative agenda, away from crisis management, is not widely reflected in the Fairness Commission model – although some Commissions have set ambitions for major long-term change which do suggest such an approach. More prevalent, however, is a sense that Commissions are seeking to take mitigating action against the worst impacts of poverty, in the context of significant public

spending reductions and national government policies perceived as being at odds with a fairness agenda.

A shift towards a greater third sector role, away from the state, is also part of the move to an Enabling State. Third sector organisations have generally played a prominent role in Commissions, with representatives serving as Commissioners and organisations providing Commissions with opportunities to engage with citizens and service users. However, the role of the third sector appears to decrease in the implementation phase, which, to date, has tended to be heavily local authority led.

As a Trust we take the view that a sense of agency and control over one's life is a critical factor in personal wellbeing. Our analysis of Fairness Commissions, brought to life through discussions at our round table, emphasised that this is equally true regarding the lived experience of local authority workers and their local partners. Roundtable participants talked about how the process of the Fairness Commission had helped them regain a shared sense of 'mission' and a coherent ethical framework for taking difficult decisions. The scope and ambition of the issues examined enabled many participants to recapture the sense of initiative, strategic direction and public service essential to the good stewardship of their communities.

We would welcome your thoughts on the contents of this Discussion Paper. If you have ideas of how we can encourage better sharing of learning and collaboration between Fairness Commissions, please contact Gail Irvine, Policy Officer, at gail@carnegieuk.org

# Appendix 1:

## List of Fairness Commissions in the UK

1. Birmingham Social Inclusion Process
2. Blackpool Fairness Commission
3. Brighton & Hove Fairness Commission
4. Bristol Fairness Commission
5. Camden Equality Taskforce
6. Croydon Opportunity and Fairness Commission
7. Dundee Fairness Commission
8. East Lothian Poverty Commission
9. Fairer Fife Commission
10. Greater Manchester Poverty Commission
11. Greenwich Fairness Commission
12. Islington Fairness Commission
13. Lancashire Fairness Commission
14. Liverpool Fairness Commission
15. London Fairness Commission
16. Newport Fairness Commission
17. North Ayrshire Fair for All Commission
18. North Lanarkshire Fairness Commission
19. Newcastle Fairness Commission
20. Oldham Fairness Commission
21. Perth and Kinross Fairness Commission
22. Plymouth Fairness Commission
23. Redbridge Fairness Commission
24. Renfrewshire Tackling Poverty Commission
25. Sheffield Fairness Commission
26. Shetland Tackling Inequalities Commission
27. Southampton Fairness Commission
28. Thurrock Fairness Commission
29. Tower Hamlets Fairness Commission
30. Wakefield Poverty and Prosperity Commission
31. York Fairness Commission

# Appendix 2:

## List of Fairness Commissions represented at the Future of Fairness Commissions Round Table, held in partnership with the Newcastle University Institute for Social Renewal on 18 February, 2017

Camden Inequality Taskforce

Fairer Fife Commission

Islington Fairness Commission

London Fairness Commission

Newcastle Fairness Commission

Newport Fairness Commission

North Ayrshire Fair for All Commission

North Lanarkshire Fairness Commission

Perth and Kinross Fairness Commission

Redbridge Fairness Commission

Sheffield Fairness Commission

Shetland Tackling Inequalities Commission

Southampton Fairness Commission

Tower Hamlets Fairness Commission

York Fairness Commission

# List of roundtable speakers and participants:

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Sean Baine, London Fairness Commission

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Jonathan Cheshire OBE, Southampton Solent University

Nicky Denison, Wordfern Limited

George Dodds, NHS Health Scotland

Naomi Eisenstadt, Independent Advisor on Poverty and Inequality to the Scottish Government

Anna Grant, Carnegie UK Trust

Annette Hastings, University of Glasgow

Jenny Hasenfuss, Newcastle University Institute for Social Renewal

Cllr Andy Hull, Islington Council

Gail Irvine, Carnegie UK Trust

Barry Knight, Webb Memorial Trust

Cllr Bob Littlewood, Redbridge Council

Cllr Joyce McCarty, Newcastle Council

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ISBN 978-1909447684

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