



Poverty Truth

West Cheshire Poverty Truth Advisory Board Delivering a Fairer Future

30th June 2023

Chaired by: Susan Whitfield and Lisa Denson

Attendees

Councillor Lisa Denson, Susan, Carol, Steph, Sarah, Kay, Sue, Anthony, Susan, Tyra, Barbara, Gus, Cllr Rachel Williams, Steph Ellis, Bev Wilson, Cath Fletcher.

1. Welcome and introductions

Susan welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Upcoming Issues for people in hardship

Pension Credit - Gus raised the issue of people not claiming pension credit and the need to improve communications to make people aware that it is easy to claim. Use social media, radio stations, walk in places and ask parish councils to support getting the message out. It was agreed that there was a need to get the message out to professionals to pass on and promote tools such as the benefits calculator. Anthony suggested we could do a podcast on the cost of living to get information out there. Steph suggested making more use of TicTok .

Heat network issue – Cllr Williams raised an issue with a housing association not passing on energy support payments on to clients within a reasonable period, putting residents under significant strain. It was agreed it was important to get the housing associations all involved in our work.

3. Poverty Truth Annual Report

Cath shared a presentation highlighting achievements up to the end of March 2023. It shows what can be achieved and that achievements have been made by Inspirers working together. It was agreed to use this content to develop an infographics/video and voice-over and use through a variety of outlets.

4 PTAB development - Cath

Andrew from the Poverty Truth Network (PTN) observed our last PTAB meeting, it was part of the proposal to work with PTN on some facilitated sessions to make sure we make the most of PTAB. There will be a steering group to oversee this review and develop a model that others can follow. All PTAB members will be involved in the workshops.

- **Action – Co-chair, past co-chairs and support team to be involved in the steering group with PTN**

5. Food in temporary accommodation

Tyra shared a presentation about the work Tracey, Sarah and Tyra had been working on to support people in temporary accommodation who were having difficulty accessing food. A range of organisations got involved to develop 'essentials packs' these included vouchers for laundrette, local cafes etc. There is now a specific hotel for families, with shared kitchens and laundry facilities.

This gave the benefit of families having headspace to think (without worrying about food / cooking / washing) to be able to move on in 6-7 weeks. There are still a lot of challenges for families in temporary accommodation including transport, especially for schools.

6. Fair Employment Charter

Cheshire and Warrington Leader's Board are consulting on a draft Fair Employment Charter that employers could sign-up to with different tiers of membership. Improving employment standards within the borough is a key element of the Fairer Future Strategy and it was agreed to prepare a response from the Board.

Key points from discussion

- Membership tiers are possibly confusing it would be useful to have an entry-level tier and full compliance.
- Agreeing to share hours/rotas in advance is critical.
- Can small/micro businesses be included? The draft feels quite corporate.
- Consider how this assessed and checked and get genuine feedback from staff.
- Consider support for people that haven't got transport.
- Could there be experts going in to advise/check. Such as disability experts?
- Concern about it being a 'voluntary process'. If you sign-up you must abide by it.
- Cath suggested we request an 'experts by experience' conversation.
- Could have people come up with guidelines for workspaces.
- Could the Council start and lead the way around using lived experience around accessing work.

- **Action: Cath to request a meeting with the LEP so PTAB can feed their views into this process.**

7. Beans on Toast

Beans on Toast training by inspirers has been really impactful. Tyra and Rachel will be speaking at the food summit to share an update on the work so far. Access to school uniform has also been identified as a big issue for many residents.

- **Action – Task and Finish on school uniform to be established for 24/25 academic year**

8. Borough plan

Bev shared slides on how the next Borough Plan will be developed. The Council is having early conversations with partners to understand how they feel the Council should engage with the public and what questions they should be asking. The Board suggested that engagement and activities for children will be important as well as the need to make it easy to understand and age-friendly.

9. AOB:

Antony raised that the forms to access adult education funding are a barrier and need to be reviewed.

- **Action - Bev to raise this with the Adult Learning Team**