

Date: 16 April 2014

Agenda item number: 6

Title: Poverty Leadership Panel's influencing role – volunteering

Summary: The Panel agreed (November 2013) that it has a key role in influencing political and organisational decisions, as well as public attitudes to poverty. It was agreed that further consideration should be given to how this could work in practice and that a paper would be brought to the April meeting.

This paper suggests how the Panel could use its leverage to bring about practical change by other organisations not immediately involved in the Panel's work. It then presents a specific example of a position statement about volunteering that the Panel can endorse, which will be used by partner agencies in Glasgow to advocate for change.

This report is for: Agreement.

Recommendation: The Panel:

- (i) agree to the proposed method of using the Panel's influence to bring about change;
- (ii) endorse the draft position statement about volunteering.

Poverty Leadership Panel Advocacy Approach

1. This paper outlines the Poverty Leadership Panel's influencing role. It sets out how the Panel will use its leverage to effect change for people living in poverty in Glasgow.
2. The overarching goal of the Panel's work is to use the Panel's moral and organisational authority to represent the interest of our citizens in a strategic way, to make practical recommendations and to encourage consideration of how resources should be re-routed.
3. In its terms of reference, the Panel has agreed to:
 - Make practical recommendations for policy and action to reduce poverty and exclusion in Glasgow.
 - Support individual members to act as champions for communicating the Panel's work.
 - Maintain commitment and momentum around the city's anti-poverty work.
4. It is proposed that as implementation of the Action Plan gathers pace, specific issues will be brought to the Panel's attention by the working groups or 'stream leads'. The Panel will be asked to agree position statements, which clarify where the Panel stands on specific issues and what the Panel regards as requiring change. These statements would then be used as an advocacy tool for change by partners in Glasgow.
5. Importantly, the fundamental principle of the Panel's work is that there is active and meaningful participation of people living in poverty in decisions and policies affecting them. This core principle must be reflected in the process of arriving at these position statements and also in their content.
6. The Panel will advocate for change on issues related to the six priorities set out in the Action Plan. Specific issues may include but are not limited to: the living wage, impact of welfare reforms on Glasgow, the allocation of resources within Glasgow by partners and to Glasgow by national and Westminster governments.
7. The audience for the Panel's efforts may include the local and national media, local, national and UK governments, public bodies and the private sector, as well as fellow Panel members.

Volunteering

8. A specific example of how the Panel's influence could be used to effect change in practice has come from the volunteering group.
9. Volunteering is part of the work and worth priority. The relevant goal in the Action Plan is that 'volunteering is recognised as having value in itself and people living in poverty can access volunteering opportunities'.
10. From this goal flow several actions including 'working with JobsCentre Plus and the Home Office to clarify guidance and raise awareness of rules around volunteering/ benefit claimants and volunteering/ asylum seekers'.
11. Individuals and agencies working with people in poverty have consistently reported that there are discrepancies in the information people receive about their

freedom to volunteer. For example, the Home Office's guidance for asylum seekers states that they have the right to volunteer. However, it is not clear whether this is being applied uniformly or at all in Glasgow. There are similar inconsistencies in the way benefit claimants are advised about their freedom to volunteer.

12. The volunteering group intends to approach the DWP and the Home Office about these issues.
13. To help them do this, the volunteering group has asked that the Panel endorse the following statement:

The Poverty Leadership Panel believes that everyone should be free to choose to volunteer their time, energy and skills for the benefit of their community.

Volunteering is valuable to the life of the city because it benefits both our communities and the people that volunteer - in terms of wellbeing, employability and social integration. The chance to volunteer is therefore particularly important for many people living in poverty in Glasgow.

It is in everyone's interests that the freedom to volunteer is unrestricted, particularly those people who are seeking asylum or are relying on social security benefits.

We ask that the Home Office and the Department of Work and Pensions work with the Panel to clarify their guidelines and processes regarding volunteering. This will facilitate the participation of people currently excluded from these opportunities.

Increasing opportunities to volunteer is part of our ambitions for a people's legacy from the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games.

14. Agencies that have assisted drafting this statement include Volunteer Glasgow, Glasgow Life, Scottish Refugee Council, Glasgow City Council, Glasgow Disability Alliance, and Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector.
15. These agencies are gathering case studies of how people's volunteering activities or aspirations are being affected by locally implemented policy and practice. They have asked for assistance in gathering or highlighting case studies.

Recommendation

16. It is recommended that the Panel:

- agree to the proposed method of using the Panel's influence to bring about change; and
- endorse the draft statement about volunteering.