

## Poverty Leadership Panel

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**Date:** 23 May 2013

**Agenda item number:** 2

**Title:** Tackling Poverty Together: Tackling Poverty Working Group

**Summary:** The attached paper provides some background information on work carried out last year. It is the report of the Tackling Poverty Working Group presented to Community Planning Partners in February 2013.

**This report is for:** Information

**Recommendation:** The Panel notes the background work by the Tackling Poverty Working Group.

**Tackling Poverty Together**  
**Tackling Poverty Working Group**  
**December 2012**

**Introduction**

Over the last 30 years the external image of Glasgow has changed dramatically. Gone is the image of Glasgow as a heavy industrial base with significant problems of violence and poverty. Instead it is seen as 'one of Europe's most vibrant, dynamic and stylish cities'<sup>1</sup> and a primary retail, sporting and service industry hub.

However, not far below the surface persistent problems remain. Glasgow continues to have some of the highest levels of poverty, poor health and inequality of any city in Europe. These problems are currently being compounded by the worst recession since the 1930s.

The challenge facing Glasgow's public, private and third sector partners, particularly in the current context, is how to work together to ensure that Glasgow's unacceptable levels of poverty and inequality are addressed as effectively as possible.

**Background**

In February 2012, Glasgow Community Planning Partnership (GCPP) established a short-term Tackling Poverty Working Group comprising of GCPP representatives alongside people who struggle against poverty on a daily basis. The Working Group was chaired by Rev Dr Martin Johnstone, Chair of Glasgow's Third Sector Forum.

This specific piece of work sits alongside a wide range of other commitments and initiatives to address the symptoms and causes of poverty in Glasgow including, specific commitments from Glasgow City Council, independent research,<sup>2</sup> a number of short term groups considering the impact of welfare reform and a wide range of partnership initiatives.

**Five core messages**

In presenting its final report, the Working Group wants to highlight five core messages which it believes, if adequately addressed, would help to make the city's efforts to tackle poverty much more effective.

- **Dignity has to be at the heart of any framework.** The deliberate blaming of those who suffer from poverty is unacceptable. Poverty is a denial of human rights and needs to be addressed as such.
- **People struggling against poverty need to be seen as part of the solution.** If poverty is to be adequately addressed in Glasgow, the knowledge and expertise of those struggling against it on a daily basis needs to be far more effectively harnessed. People struggling against

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<sup>1</sup> [Glasgow: Scotland with Style](#)

<sup>2</sup> See for instance, [The Economic Impact of Welfare Policy Changes on Glasgow: A report to Glasgow City Council from the Fraser of Allander Institute](#), September 2012.

poverty need to be supported so they can be involved in policy development, implementation and evaluation. This will lead to shared, better solutions.

- **More effective coordination of anti-poverty work across the city.** There is a great deal of good practice already underway but it is often poorly reported and badly integrated both within and across partners. The work would benefit immeasurably from co-production of a high level Action Plan and clearly articulated leadership that can coordinate public commitment across the city's partners to resource and tackle specific issues over a sustained period of time. Properly integrated services would require the pooling of partners' budgets.
- **Public sector spending must be targeted on tackling poverty and inequality.** The fact that public sector spending in Glasgow is under extreme pressure makes it even more critical that available resources are used to tackle poverty. The introduction of a specific measure to 'poverty proof' partners' budgets would help ensure that the available resources are used most effectively. The potential to pool budgets should also be canvassed.
- **Welfare reform necessitates action now.** The Working Group has been operating against the backdrop of unprecedented changes within the UK benefits system. These are having, and will have, a significant impact on people and services already under pressure. Coordinated, effective action is essential to support Glasgow's most vulnerable citizens.

### ***Different themes and lenses***

The Working Group met on four separate occasions as well as working in smaller groups around five inter-related themes: *Attitudinal Change; Child Poverty; Credit and Debt; Welfare Reform; and Work and Worth*. These themes should be understood as different lenses through which to address aspects of poverty within the city. These themes will be brought into focus through the development of an integrated action plan.

- **Attitudinal Change.** If poverty is going to be more effectively addressed, we need to help to change attitudes. Poverty is not inevitable. It is not the fault of those living in poverty. In this, as in other aspects of our approach, we need to take a human rights approach.

Specific recommendations include:

- ✓ Training across all appropriate public sector staff to help to challenge the stereotyping of people living in poverty. This should be delivered, in partnership, by people struggling against poverty.
- ✓ Encouraging media organisations to promote positive and accurate messages of people living in poverty. This could be done by a city-wide adoption of a set of reporting standards.<sup>3</sup>
- ✓ Developing more 'viral models' of communication. Traditional media channels are increasingly less effective in promoting transformative

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<sup>3</sup> Work done by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation may be a useful starting point. See, [Reporting Poverty in the UK: A Practical Guide for Journalists](#), October 2009.

messages. More work can be done around social media and storytelling to share positive messages of the resilience and inspiration of people overcoming poverty.

- **Child Poverty.** Considerable work developing a Child Poverty Action Plan has already been undertaken over the last two years and appropriate elements of this plan now need to be integrated into the wider anti-poverty framework. In undertaking this work, we need to recognise that poverty affects women, and therefore families, disproportionately.

Specific recommendations include:

- ✓ Embedding child poverty within a children's rights approach and ensuring that this resonates with aspirations for Glasgow to become a Child Friendly City.
- ✓ Developing new models of child care. The current models of child care provision are increasingly inappropriate for the current context. We need to review the provision of child care to determine what we can do differently to better support children and families.
- ✓ Prioritising youth employability to ensure that the cycle of poverty across generations is broken.
- ✓ Commissioning resources and services through a validated Child Poverty Toolkit.
- ✓ Developing more 'real time' linked data sets to monitor the impact of the action plan and to be able identify those families most at risk.
- ✓ Involving families in the development of creative and effective solutions.

- **Credit and Debt.** There are very high levels of personal debt in the city and this is compounded for many by the lack of access to financial advice, as well as affordable credit.

Specific recommendations include:

- ✓ Reducing the influence and impact of pay-day and door-step lenders. This means not only challenging exorbitant rates of interest but also promoting and supporting viable alternatives, such as credit unions.
- ✓ Working to provide financial advice and support in light of increased pressures upon these services. This should include the provision of financial capability and budgeting skills training. At the same time, a model of working which draws on the strengths and experiences of people living in poverty needs to be developed.
- ✓ Challenging high street banks to do more, in terms of reducing levels of personal debt and helping people to open bank accounts. Community Planning Partners should use their leadership and financial leverage to help to bring this about.
- ✓ Establishing a citywide mechanism to provide small emergency payments as the budget for the Scottish Welfare Fund is devolved to the local authority to administer.

- **Welfare Reform.** The impact of wide-scale changes to benefits is going to have a huge impact on the life of many of Glasgow's poorest citizens. The financial impact alone will exceed £100 million per year in lost benefits. A great deal of good work is already being done, but much more is required.

Specific recommendations include:

- ✓ Directly involving people who will be affected by welfare reform and supporting them to become frontline communicators of information as well as advocates for change.
  - ✓ Ensuring that individuals and families are accessing their maximum level of benefits in the run up to the introduction of Universal Credit. This is an immediate priority.
  - ✓ Providing training in the benefits system to key frontline staff across partners, including third sector organisations, to ensure that accurate information is fully disseminated. There is also a vital need to extend that knowledge to those on benefits – this group will be the most effective communicators of information.
  - ✓ Maximising the up-take of 'passported benefits' over the coming years.
  - ✓ Increasing support, including relational and psychological support, for those within the appeals process who are seeking to challenge DWP decisions.
  - ✓ Carefully monitoring the impact of methods of payment for Universal Credit, including paying monthly and to a single member of a household and developing appropriate support.
- **Work and Worth.** Much of the city's employability strategy is based on the pre-2008 economic environment and needs to be significantly rethought in the light of the current economic context. There is an urgent need to develop new employment models which value the contributions that people can make, and are making, in their neighbourhoods.

Specific recommendations include:

- ✓ More effectively using evidence, including evidence from people struggling against poverty, to inform the development of future employability programmes.
- ✓ Establishing clearer pathways between volunteering and work. For some, the contribution of volunteering needs to be valued in and of itself – through volunteering, people are contributing to the life of the city.
- ✓ More effectively working with employers to create labour demand and to promote progression, particularly around entry level jobs.
- ✓ Supporting group-led micro-businesses which meet local needs and give groups and individuals increased skills and incomes.
- ✓ Promoting the Living Wage across all partners and employers in the city. A Living Wage helps to support people out of poverty. A Living

Wage is a critical part of a wider strategy which is required to tackle in-work poverty.

### ***Conclusion***

Glasgow's anti-poverty strategy needs to be more than an accumulation of existing initiatives or even the addition of some new initiatives to existing policy. It must be holistic, measureable, transparent and sustainable. At its heart, it must involve people experiencing poverty. It should help to further develop resilience in communities where local experience can drive the changes needed to break the cycle of poverty. Importantly, it must be able to hold partners to account.

The recommendations laid out to date are indicative rather than exhaustive. They will develop and adapt in the light of work and evidence. At the same time, any effective anti-poverty framework must have a clear focus, with outcome measures aligned to a set of indicators specific to Glasgow. Critically, it must be informed by people who know about poverty from direct experience.

### ***Next steps***

An Action Plan needs to be developed (some work has already been undertaken on this) which clearly lays out aspirations, plans, measurable outcomes and responsibilities. A monitoring and evaluation framework will be developed to ensure time-bound progress and organisational accountability.

The Action Plan will be developed with linkages to the Single Outcome Agreement, to be agreed by partners and the Scottish Government.

Each partner will be invited to appoint a senior lead person to oversee the implementation of the Action Plan within their organisation and ensure effective collaboration across the partnership. Overall coordination of the strategy will be through Glasgow City Council

An Advisory Panel, to be co-chaired by the Leader of the Council will be established to help guide the city's work on anti-poverty. The Advisory Panel will be comprised of councillors, community planning partners, academics, people with direct experience of poverty and representatives from the private sector. The Panel will meet bi-annually and will be supported by subgroups clustered around the five themes of the working groups.

### ***Recommendations***

The CPP Strategic Board is asked to;

1. Note the contents of this report;
2. Agree that Glasgow City Council, in conjunction with partners and people with direct experience of poverty, will produce an Action Plan and a monitoring and evaluation framework to be developed for consideration by the above Advisory Panel;
3. Agree to appoint a senior lead person to oversee the implementation of the Action Plan within their organisation and ensure effective collaboration across the partnership;
4. Agree to consider the Action Plan and any progress reports.

