

**DRAFT: Poverty and Worklessness Commission meeting minutes**  
**11am, Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2016**  
**Hammersmith Town Hall, King Street.**

**PRESENT**

**Commissioners:**

Hannah Aldridge (HA)  
Joy Arogundade (JA)  
Paul Doe (PD)  
Alison Inglis-Jones (AIJ)  
Cllr Sue Fennimore (SF)  
Zarar Qayyum (ZQ)  
Howard Sinclair (HS)  
Christina Smyth (CS)  
Alex Tambourides (AT)

**LBHF:**

Tom Conniffe (TC)  
Nivene Powell (NP)  
Rob Rix (RR)  
Helen Rowbottom (HR)  
Duncan Smith (DS)

**Apologies:**

Inspector Yasser Awad (YA)  
Rosalind Duhs (RD)  
Shani Lee (SL)  
Kamini Sanghani (KS)

**Observers**

Tom Pearson (TP)  
Anna Waterman (AW)

The following summarises the discussion of the Hammersmith & Fulham Poverty and Worklessness Commission's fourth meeting. Please contact [tom.conniffe@lbhf.gov.uk](mailto:tom.conniffe@lbhf.gov.uk) for more information.

**ACTIONS ARISING**

**NP:** Re-circulate the qualitative research specification and ethical framework to all Commissioners, highlighting options and asking for views.

**NP:** Circulate findings from the Health Forums, potentially to invite attendees to give qualitative evidence.

**HR:** Circulate HA's analysis on poverty in Hammersmith and Fulham to all Commissioners.

**AIJ and JA:** Liaise around the best way to mitigate risks as residents transition onto Universal Credit.

**AT:** Circulate the Routes onto Employment and Support Allowance report to all Commissioners.

**AW:** Circulate the London Healthy Workplace charter.

**HS:** Circulate the Government's Life Chances report.

**DS:** Circulate the Insight and Analytics team's modelling assessing the risk of children going into care and explore the potential for predictive analytics.

**JA:** Circulate the results, figures and outcomes of the local Work Programme from as far back as possible, preferably pre-recession.

**RR and AIJ:** Set up a meeting to develop the Life Courses workstream.

**HR and SF:** Get in touch with Sir Michael Marmot to see what pointers he can provide, particularly around health inequalities.

**Commissioners:** Read ethical framework and research options, and provide feedback to NP by 24<sup>th</sup> May 2016 at nivene.powell@lbhf.gov.uk. Suggest sources of respondents.

**Workstream leaders (ZQ, SL, HR, PD, HS, KS, AT, YA, HA, RR):** Circulate final drafts of evidence reviews (see the evidence matrix) by 17<sup>th</sup> June, including a section on questions for expert witnesses

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 12th July for 2 hours at 11am in the Conference Room, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Hammersmith Town Hall.

## **EVIDENCE REVIEW FINDINGS: HOUSING**

PD summarised the work to date. Key points included:

- The private-rented sector (PRS) is helping to push all house prices up. The London Poverty profile has determined that the number of benefit claimants in the PRS is growing rapidly. There are high rates of population churn. In discussion, the point was made that people on low incomes don't tend to rent privately in Hammersmith and Fulham as it's so expensive. This was borne out by HA's analysis. Instead they would live further out, further exacerbating the gap between social and private housing.
- There population of people living in social housing in the borough experience huge churn, but the levels of poverty and the type of poverty experience by these residents remains static; those who replace tenants moving out are also poor and in need. Longitudinal mapping of individuals would give a much better indication of how issues are effecting people, and which interventions are effective.
- Due to rent rates, only a low percentage of people are able to move from social housing into private accommodation in Hammersmith and Fulham. Shared ownership schemes may have drawbacks since significant deposits are needed to

secure a mortgage, creating too big a jump in rent rates between these two types of tenure.

- Developers are building Starter Homes, but there is significant scepticism around the scheme, as prices are beyond being affordable for people on the average income.
- There are huge numbers of people who could claim benefits but do not.
- Best practice examples include whole-place anti-poverty strategies, better access to jobs for disabled people and people experiencing mental health issues and better access to affordable childcare.
- Low-rent schemes were also found to be one of the most effective ways of supporting people out of poverty.
- A remaining question is whether there are marked differences in how different demographics escape from poverty.
- A question exists about whether local authorities in London have the remit to provide or influence an internally functioning economy in terms of the jobs and skills match with provision of better quality jobs, or whether residents in poverty would be equally well placed to work outside the borough?
- Another question is whether the London Living Wage should be deployed, particularly with regard to smaller businesses who would be most under pressure to deliver this pledge.
- The council should carefully consider its approach, particularly around allocations policy, to best provide for people who are currently in the system, and allocate housing according to need. The council could particularly focus on residents who are able to move into different housing and into employment, providing the right support to enable them to do so.
- It is vital to differentiate between people unable to work (such as those on ESA) and those able to work. For the former, they should be provided with housing and services to make their lives fulfilling.
- Currently, there is a lack of coordination between the Job Centre and providers and employers in Hammersmith and Fulham. In discussion the point was made that the DWP West London district is now working with partnership managers, employers and providers enabling people to apply for flexible support funding for JSA and ESA benefits. Weekly analysis is being undertaken at the Hammersmith Job Centre to identify what is preventing people going back into work.
- It also emerged in discussion that the transition to Universal Credit is coming within the next few weeks. Reports of gaps of several weeks without benefit payment on transition are emerging round the country. A concerted effort is required from the DWP as people transition onto Universal Credit to ensure that they aren't left without rent or benefits during this time. Communication methods for those with low levels of literacy and numeracy are particularly important.

## **EVIDENCE REVIEW FINDINGS: MENTAL HEALTH**

AT summarised the work to date. Key points included:

- 3500 are claiming Employment Support Allowance (ESA) – a total that has remained fairly static for the last five years at least. Information is available about how many claimants there are per ward, but information is still needed about how long people have been claiming for.
- The social determinants of mental health – such as housing, education and access to food – are key. At every turn social circumstance determine mental health issues in an iterative cycle. For example, people in debt are twice as likely to have mental health issues. It is also important to note that people’s mental health and needs fluctuate over time.
- The suicide level roughly reflects the unemployment rate – when the unemployment rate last increased by 1%, the suicide rate increased by 0.8%.
- Social cohesion is to key to tackling mental health issues, and it would be good to capture and analyse levels of social cohesion in the course of the Commission.
- Social stigma around mental health issues prevent people going into employment and from retaining jobs as people do not tell their employers about their health issues for fear of the consequences.
- Mental health issues constitute the single biggest cause of absence in work. Presenteeism - the practice of being present at one's place of work for more hours than is required, especially as a manifestation of insecurity about one's job – produces twice as much of a cost as absenteeism.
- A core question is how the population of 3500 in Hammersmith and Fulham on ESA came about. The Roots to ESA report surveys 3000 people, and would be useful for everyone to read in relation to this question. The tri-borough’s 2013 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment on employment support for people with mental illness, physical disabilities and learning disabilities states that 57% of people transition to ESA directly from work; the figure is actually 19%, with 36% of people unemployed before going onto ESA. The JSNA praises Individual Placement Support, but H&F Mind employees are sceptical about its efficacy, with under 50 people gaining employment through this scheme in the report’s findings, and a smaller number retained into employment.
- Evidence shows that the DWP’s Work Programme is ineffective in terms of mental health outcomes, and in fact exacerbates mental health issues. Work assessments are also a broken system – there’s a high rate of appeals success due to the initial assessment inaccuracy. This process is already under review nationally.
- Different sectors treated people experiencing mental health issues that affected their ability to work differently. In the public sector, people more likely to return to work after taking time off due to mental health reasons. In the private sector, the handling of these issues was less good but often a timescale is mutually and effectively

agreed between employees and employers. However, employees in smaller businesses were more likely to cease employment and starting claiming ESA.

- Emerging conclusions are that systemic change is needed to create significant change, and resource should be focussed on preventing people entering ESA claimancy. The social determinants of employment are so significant that a back-to-work scheme should be holistic for each person requiring support.
- More information is needed around ESA claimants: how many could work versus how many can't? It would also be useful to determine how people are accessing services, e.g. are those claiming ESA also receiving counselling?
- Back-to-work schemes must properly vetted to ensure that people (particularly ESA claimants) aren't being exploited for free labour.

The following data may be of use to the Commission:

- ESA claims - the caseload for the Support Group or Work Related Activity Group and their disabling condition in on Nomis (Go to: Query data > DWP Benefits > benefit claimants - employment and support allowance.)
- ESA Sanctions on DWP stat explore (a log-in is required)
- ESA eligibility, including mental and cognitive ability

## **EVIDENCE REVIEW FINDINGS: LIFE COURSES**

RR summarised the work to date. Key points included:

- A method for understanding life course cycles was to look at the trigger points for people entering periods of poverty and worklessness , and how challenges affect different demographics in different ways.
- Over 8 years, a third of the population experience poverty in different ways. Life events such as losing a job, retirement and relationship breakdown are examples of these trigger points.
- The review is being informed by data from Citizens Advice Bureau and St Mungo's Broadway, but more data is needed for this evidence to be rigorous.
- Qualitative evidence has been tentatively collected from people on the frontline of services, and will be bolstered by the Commission's qualitative evidence reviews. For example, charities supporting older people provided an insight into how the housing crisis is affecting older people as their children can't afford to work less in order to support them.
- Mapping a life cycle of poverty will give indications about where interventions are currently made and where they could additionally be made to be more and effective and preventative.
- In discussion it was also agreed that predictive analytics could help to identify triggers, and the Commission should investigate which data sources are needed to run effective analysis. The Council has recently completed an effective piece of modelling assessing the risk of children going into care, which will be circulated to Commissioners so that would be a good starting point.

## **EVIDENCE REVIEW FINDINGS: OLDER POORER PEOPLE**

CS summarised the work to date. Key points included:

- There are approximately 10500 poorer older people in the borough.
- They benefit from low rents in social housing which are currently at 25% of market rates.
- Some also benefit from good social networks
- There are issues around under occupancy of rooms in older people's housing; 25% have an extra bedroom, and 25% have two or more extra bedrooms. The incentives to move are low.
- Many vulnerable, older people were previously part of other priority groups.
- There are low take-up figures for benefits amongst this group, particularly means-tested benefits.
- Nearly half of this cohort were born overseas. High Accident and Emergency admission rates are an indicator of issues related to this cohort. There is greater provision of community care in this borough for this cohort compared to other London boroughs.
- Loneliness is one of the biggest issues affecting this group. Volunteering is already part of the answer. Improving the borough's volunteering offer could help further. The Commission could work with Hammersmith United Charities and SOBUS to develop this offer.
- Older people in social housing have a valuable tenancy. They could benefit from high land values via for example lodgers. They could be paid a more substantial incentive than the current rate to transfer to smaller and/or purpose-built accommodation.

## **QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

NP summarise this work in the absence of RD with whom she had been working:

- The next stage of research is gaining qualitative evidence. A plan and ethical framework had been circulated. There were options in connection with who should conduct the research.
- RD can provide training around qualitative research and the ethical framework.
- Commissioners should help to identify people who could give evidence across the key cohorts affected by poverty and worklessness.
- The council's recent Health Forums captured qualitative data around the borough relating to mental health, often in connection with poverty and worklessness. Findings from these forums should be reviewed by the Commission, and attendees could be approached to provide evidence.