

Poverty and Worklessness Commission meeting minutes

11am, Tuesday 12th July 2016

Hammersmith Town Hall, King Street.

PRESENT

Commissioners:

Christina Smyth
Daphine Aikens
Hannah Aldridge
Yasser Awad
Howard Sinclair
Alex Tambourides

LBHF:

Cllr Fennimore
Zahra Beg
Tom Conniffe
Nivene Powell
Rob Rix
Helen Rowbottom

Apologies:

Paul Doe
Rosalind Duhs
Alison Inglis-Jones
Shani Lee
Zarar Quayyum
Kamini Sanghani

Observers

The following summarises the discussion of the Hammersmith & Fulham Poverty and Worklessness Commission's fifth meeting. Please contact tom.conniffe@lbhf.gov.uk for more information.

ACTIONS ARISING

All: Identify local people who could be interviewed as part of the qualitative research phase.

ATaylor: Circulate Turn2Us presentation and JRF's Reducing Poverty in the UK: A collection of evidence reviews.

LF: Is it possible to calculate the amount of unclaimed benefits in the borough? DWP currently use an experimental statistics to determine national figures, but the Commission is uncertain of how locally this can be determined.

ZB: Speak to the housing department's social letting agency team about HMO's and quality housing best practice for landlords.

ZQ: Look into available funding.

SF: Circulate the triage model in Redbridge which provides support for lots of older people, and a model in Ealing supporting people coming out of hospital; and with downsizing their housing. Send list of local faith groups and BAME groups to Nivene Powell, including Somali communities.

CS: Meet with Paul Rackham to speak about a volunteering offer for older people.

1. TURN2US PRESENTATION

Turn2Us are national charity situated in the borough that support people in financial hardship access welfare benefits, charitable grants and support services. They also do research, provide services, raise awareness and influence policy. Over £16bn (16.6) of welfare benefits are unclaimed, according to latest Government statistics.

Turn2Us offer:

- An online benefit calculator so people to do their own financial checks. There is also a more sophisticated calculator for providers. The calculator checks at the taper rate and impact on people's benefits as they get into work, such as an increase in hours or a caring role.
- Training for other organisations to use the benefits calculator. A third of H&F food bank volunteers have been trained to use it.
- A telephone helpline service to offer a benefits calculator over the phone
- Direct grants. £156m have been realised through benefits and grants, and Turn2Us has given £3m in direct payments.
- An iterative design process with local communities; single interventions don't work, so a multidimensional approach is adopted around financial capability, debt and relationship building. Community grants programmes to small, grassroots organisations have been successful, notably in Edinburgh.
- Ambitious programme post-community grants programme around a physical centres bringing together local support services with the community, and fills gaps. Community groups offer a welcoming place for people – impressed by Broom House in Edinburgh bringing food banks and CAB together.

2. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Evidence has been generated from data-driven local priorities. The Commission is now at the tipping point of analysis turning into emergent solutions. The following areas have been identified as part of the literature, and were discussed at the meeting (N.B. not the complete list).

- A cross-borough strategy tackling poverty and worklessness
- Employer broker systems
- Benefits maximisations
- Transforming volunteering offer
- Community hubs
- Cost of living support
- Tackling rogue landlords

Floating support is any kind of support you might need, just need to have a tenancy – council or otherwise. Currently, LBHF has one officer assessing floating support. Camden recently boosted floating support, bringing it all in-house from the third sector to access all council databases. They have save £1m. Camden now see 2000 – 3000 cases per year, and work with vulnerable families while they're in temporary support.

A community hub could provide a one stop shop, and there is appetite for this amongst local people. A pilot of co-location is already happening between the council, the Food Bank and Citizens Advice Bureau, which is working well. It would be worth piloting some co-location or joint working, building towards this model.

3. AOB

Mental health issues are primarily socio-economic, so data can generate where these people are living in the borough. Awareness raising around the five indicators could be provided, and it could be a good pilot for floating support.

Need to investigate the possibility of joint working with DWP. Lots of new DWP contracts are coming through LEPs.

The Commission needs to thoroughly cover places of faith and BAME communities as part of the focus groups and qualitative evidence gathering.

The next meeting of the Commission will be on a Wednesday, and will alternate across different dates of the week.