



Minutes of the Torbay Child Poverty Commission

17 April 2013

-: Present :-

Councillor Neil Bent, Councillor Chris Lewis, Councillor Robert Excell and Councillor Julien Parrott, Michelle Kennedy (Chair), Torbay Council: Richard Williams, Director of Children's Services, Julie Sharland, Strategic Housing Manager, Nikki Henderson, Community & Voluntary sector, Sheena Leaf, TDA Business sector,

(Also in attendance: Councillor Bobbie Davies, Alison Kenny, Helen Stanley (Sanctuary Housing), Sue Cousins, Maria Youngs (Windmill Centre),

1. Child Poverty Commission meets the Community

The Chair commenced the meeting by asking for round the table introductions and requested a minute silence out of respect for Margaret Thatcher.

The Chair explained the work of the Commission and welcomed Alison Kenny /Helen Stanley from Sanctuary Housing and Sue Cousins/Marie Youngs from the Windmill Centre, Volunteer Service who would be sharing with the Commission their different experiences of ways of tackling child poverty in Torbay.

Sanctuary Housing: the barriers/difficulties encountered by a person with a mental health issue were highlighted and discussed. This included:-

- high level of individuals experiencing bankruptcies and debt relief orders during December and January
- no low cost loans available
- lack of awareness of tax reforms and bedroom tax
- fuel and water debts

The Commission discussed and noted the issues surrounding the implications of the welfare cuts including the bedroom tax for families.

Sanctuary Housing continues to support local community initiatives in promoting longer term resilience including the Windmill Family Learning Programme and has links into employment programmes.

The Commission recognised the importance of planning effective resources and developing an evidence base on how community projects are supported to aid future planning/funding.

The Commission noted that the business community had a wide interest in supporting communities and were keen to become involved.

Volunteer Service

Sue Cousins outlined work of the Young Mums group which was formed by a group of volunteers initially funded by the Local Authority. The volunteers support a network of young mums who feel socially excluded and run programmes encouraging self esteem, cooking skills and play. The Group has secured funding for a five year Family Learning Programme from the Lottery.

The Commission listened to shared experiences from two young mums who use the service.

The Chair thanked Sanctuary Housing and the Windmill Centre for their contribution to the meeting.

Actions

- i) Overview and Scrutiny Youth Unemployment report to be included on the agenda at a meeting in June (RW)**
- ii) Community Partnership Strategy to be circulated to Commission (MK)**

2. Child Poverty Commission meeting

3. Apologies for Absence

Councillors Faulkner and Bent, Anna Kettley

4. Minutes of last meeting

The Commission noted the minutes of the meeting held on 25th February 2013 to be a true record

5. Matter Arising

Outstanding actions:-

Item 5. Child Poverty Impact Statements to be circulated to the Commission for consideration (Anna Kettley)

Item 6. 31st May meeting: Primary and Secondary Headteachers to be identified to attend meeting – Julie Sharland to finalise arrangements with Suzie Franklin, Head of Schools

Item 6. Mental Health: CAMHS – Bruce Bell to be invited to a future meeting – (JS/MK)

Update to action:-

6.(i) Business sector: on line recruitment processes – community benefiting from greater outreach service supported with lap tops for applying for jobs on line.

6. Terms of Reference

The Chair asked the Commission to consider the proposal for a name change for the Commission. The Director of Children's Services explained that the existing 2013 Children's Plan runs out at the end of the year and underpins the work in the social care improvement journey. RW proposed that the Child Poverty Commission's gathered evidence from the community can be mapped with the safeguarding evidence to develop a new Children's Plan.

The Commission had a mixed response to a name change and it was agreed to feedback further views to the Chair.

7. Work Plan - 11.00 a.m.

4.2 Child Poverty evidence work: It was agreed to defer the Financial Inclusion report to a future meeting when Cllr Alison Hernandez would be available.

Homes not housing

Councillor Julien Parrott introduced his report to the Commission. The evidence report highlights the issues around:-

- Affordable housing
- Security and stability
- Recognising that the crisis is already here
- Need for strategic housing plan
- Compulsory Accreditation for private landlords

The Commission recognised the new pressures on the Local Authority to provide quality homes in the private rented section and ways of driving up standards through a compulsory landlord schemes.

The Commission noted that Shelter are currently running a campaign to combat rogue letting agents as well as rogue landlords.

The Commission listened to issues being faced by people who complain about housing conditions through letting agencies and the legislation of housing payment to landlords.

Nikki Henderson informed the Commission of her work practice through ICloud which supports young people with a disability who are living independently in the private housing sector.

The Commission agreed to the report's recommendations relating to –

- Lowering the site size threshold for affordable homes
- Raising the local housing allowance for three bedroom homes
- Deliver a Housing Strategy through the Local Development Plan

8. AOB

Fixed Odds betting terminals: The Commission noted the concerns regarding the possibility of betting terminals being placed within Torbay.

9. Dates of meetings

Future meetings:

May 31st – agenda: Forward Planning (What else to look at) and interim report

June 20th – agenda: Overview and Scrutiny Youth Unemployment report

July (date to be arranged) Health and Financial Inclusion