



## Minutes of the Torbay Child Poverty Commission

20 June 2013

-: Present :-

Councillor Neil Bent, Councillor Jenny Faulkner and Councillor Julien Parrott Torbay Council: Richard Williams, Director of Children's Services, Julie Sharland, Strategic Housing Manager,

(Also in attendance: Nikki Bond, Headteacher St Marychurch Primary, Lee Tozer, Jobcentre Plus, Heather Vallance, Benefits and Revenue and Debbie Passmore, TDA )

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### 1. Child Poverty Commission meets the Community

The Chair commenced the meeting by asking for round the table introductions. She also explained the work of the Commission and welcomed Nikki Bond, Headteacher, St Marychurch Primary School, Lee Tozer, Jobcentre Plus, Heather Vallance, Benefits and Review and Debbie Passmore, TDA, who would be sharing with the Commission their experiences of ways of tackling child poverty in Torbay.

**Schools** Nikki Bond informed the Commission that following a meeting with other headteachers their collective responses to the key line of enquiries were:-

Main issues:

- Lack of aspiration from parents
- Life choices i.e. prioritising how money was spent
- Mental and physical health issues
- Low attendance
- Toilet training

#### **Income poverty**

The Commission noted the innovative ways in which the School engaged with families and the effective use of the Pupil Premium to target specific areas of need which included one to one working, enabling children to go on residential events and increasing access to technology for parents and children. Parent contracts have been successful in improving attendance at the school.

#### **Parent in worklessness/making a difference**

The Commission reflected on the Headteacher's views on making a difference which included both encouraging parents back into work without losing their benefits and life skills improving life choices. The Commission listened to an example of good practice involving a regular multi-agency meeting which made an impact on addressing wider issues.

The Commission questioned the percentage of pupils receiving free school meals (45%); class sizes (30), number of children coming into school who are not toilet trained (5:45); family learning events and safeguarding procedures (unresolved issues are referred to the Safeguarding Hub in Children's Services). It was noted that Looked After Children were known to the school although young carers were not always easily identified.

The Director of Children's Services informed the Commission of the key changes by Government to the allocation of the Early Intervention Grant, Pupil Premium and Welfare reforms. He also outlined the proposed key changes to how family learning is delivered in Torbay by engaging schools and partners in the process rather than being controlled by the three secondary schools.

The Chair summarised the findings and thanked Nikki and the headteachers for their valuable contribution to tackling child poverty in Torbay.

**Jobcentre Plus:** Lee Tozer stated that his service mirrored the aspirations of schools and highlighted the main issues being faced by the Jobcentres which were:-

- Lack of preparation for young people from schools/collages for the world of work
- Lack of uptake by local employers to take on work experience or apprenticeships
- Reluctance of young people to travel outside Torbay to obtain work
- Poor role modelling for parents/young people in relation to work
- Cultural belief that you are better off on benefits than work

He further illustrated ways in which improvements could be made by encouraging employers to take young people for work experience, send out clear messages about the benefits of being in work and the support available to families seeking work.

The Chair thanked Lee for his comprehensive picture and asked the Commission for questions.

It was noted that information for apprenticeships can be found on the internet as well as Torbay Development agency who are currently engaging with smaller employers to create opportunities for young people.

The Commission considered the barriers facing young people when looking for work and the success of the TDA in progressing their apprenticeship programme and championing the living wage. It also noted that Children's Services were progressing with the Local Authority to firmly embed child poverty in the Housing Strategy and plans to highlight the Youth Offer at Council in September.

## 2. Child Poverty Commission Meeting

The Chair thanked Councillor Chris Lewis for all his support and welcomed Councillor Ken Pritchard, new Executive Lead for Childrens, Schools and Families and the Council for their continued support.

**3. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Anna Kettley and Sheena Leaf

**4. Minutes of last meeting**

The minutes of the last meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2013 were checked for accuracy. Amendments were made to 7. Work Plan – Homes not housing – “The Commission agreed to the report’s recommendations”

**5. Matters arising**

8. AOB: Fixed Odds betting terminals: Councillor Julien Parrott reported that there is to be a briefing paper prepared for the Overview & Scrutiny Board and from that a decision will be made as to whether a further investigation is needed.

**Action**

- i) **Briefing paper of the decision of the Overview & Scrutiny Board in relation to fixed odds betting terminals to be submitted as evidence for the Child Poverty Commission recommendation report (JP)**

**6. Work Plan**

Financial Inclusion: What do we need to do? (written by Cllr Alison Hernandez)  
Heather Vallance updated the Commission on the work of the Revenue and Benefits Service following the completion on the report.

The Commission noted that Revenue and Benefits continue to jointly work with other voluntary agencies including supporting Citizens Advice Bureau and Anode (a local charitable food bank) through the Social Fund. It was noted that crisis support and discretionary payments only relate to housing needs. A review is being planned to look at the progress of initiatives in targeted areas.

**Youth Unemployment in Torbay:**

Kate Spencer outlined the conclusions and recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny report. The Commission listened to the proposals for action within Torbay Council and Employment and Skills Board in promoting collaboration with partner agencies in creating opportunities for young people.

It was noted that Children’s Services Youth Offer paper sets the context of the intent to establish an integrated service delivery model. This will be based on clear pathways and coherent arrangements for Young People that will deliver better outcomes for those in greatest need and will include improving the employment

prospects of Young People through its partnership working with Job Centre Plus, Eat that Frog, Prospect, South Devon College and schools; delivery for Young Carers ensuring their individual needs can be met and promote further integration between Parkfield, Targeted Youth Support, Careers South West and the Youth Offending service.

The Commission recognised the importance of partnership working within the community.

The Commission agreed to endorse the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Youth Unemployment report.

**Action:**

- i) **Youth Offer paper to be circulated (Cllr Jenny Faulkner)**

**7. AOB**

**Information:** The Chair has agreed to circulate further statistical information and updated Government announcements relating to Child Poverty

**Interim Child Poverty Commission report:** The Chair will be independently drafting the Interim report for debate at a Child Poverty Commission in early November.

**Actions:**

- i) Chair to circulate further statistical information to Group (MK)
- ii) Interim report to be debated at meeting in November (SM)