



# Co-operative Councils

## Innovation Network

### POVERTY



## Trafford Council

### Trafford Poverty Truth Commission

Poverty is an issue that is best described by those who experience it. Creating a platform for those with lived experience to share their story is a powerful tool to destigmatise the experience of poverty and empower those who best understand it to drive change and have their voices heard.

The Trafford Poverty Truth Commission (PTC) is a group of 34 people in Trafford who care about poverty and are committed to making things better. The group was made up 14 Community Commissioners of different ages and backgrounds who not only have a shared experience but also a unique story to share about how poverty has impacted their lives. The PTC brought these people together with 18 Civic Commissioners from the public, private and voluntary sector who have the ability to make decisions that have an impact on people who experienced poverty in Trafford.

#### How did it develop?

The Poverty Truth Commission launched in May 2022 after a period of recruitment and followed a programme of work concluding with its final report and recommendations in March 2023.

May 2022: Trafford PTC launch event with all Commissioners

June 2022 – October 2022: Workshops to develop relationships between Commissioners and identify issues in Trafford.

October 2022 – February 2023: Workshops and task groups to focus on key identified issues.

March 2023: Event to present the Commission’s recommendations and outline the impact

April 2023 – September 2023: Commissioners and partners to work on recommendations and pledges.

September 2023: The Commission gathered to review the progress of recommendations from task groups and the pledges from Civic Commissioners



### **Commissioners coming together as equals**

The Trafford Poverty Truth Commission follows the model delivered in several areas around the country. Integral to its work is building trust and relationships between those who have direct experience of poverty and those in positions of power to make decisions that can alleviate or reduce poverty. To strengthen the impact and autonomy of the group, once the Commissioners have been recruited, the Council and members of the VCSE facilitation organisation do not attend the meetings.

This recognises the power that Community and Civic Commissioners have as part of the Poverty and Truth Commission to bring about change. Community Commissioners are given the space to share their experience of poverty – some chose to do this through poetry, others through speeches, and some through writing down how they felt. The powerful candour of this process breaks down barriers between Community and Civic Commissioners, creating an environment of trust for co-creation to blossom.

### **What did the PTC achieve?**

As a result of the sessions and the sharing of stories from Community Commissioners, the PTC developed 4 recommendations to inform strategic decision making within Trafford moving forwards:

1. Improve how Trafford residents access services, including a One Stop Shop with a focus on “in person” advice.

2. Embed the Voice of Lived Experience in the way that key services engage with those in Trafford.
3. Make public transport truly accessible for everyone.
4. Tackle mental health and isolation.



### **A real impact on the lives of those experiencing poverty**

A tangible impact that the Poverty and Truth Commission has had on the lives of those experiencing poverty can be seen through recommendation one and the implementation of a One Stop Shop, now named the Stretford Advice Hub. This in-person service is available to all residents on a weekly basis, with attendance from Welfare Advice, Housing Options, Energyworks, digital support and ESOL classes, with more interested on becoming involved. Work is being conducted to develop a shared database amongst these services to mitigate against the exhaustion and frustration experienced by residents have to repeat their experiences of poverty and their story at each and every service provider they engage with.

### **Civic Commissioner Pledges**

As a result of the Poverty and Truth Commission, the Civic Commissioners from a range of organisations across Trafford made significant pledges towards tackling poverty within Trafford. As per the timeline of the PTC, these pledges have been followed up in successive meetings with the Community Commissioners from the Poverty and Truth Commission. There is a continued focus on engaging with Civic Commissioners and ensuring that their engagement continues.

### **Sustaining the Voice of Lived Experience**

Now the official Poverty and Truth Commission has concluded, the Community Commissioners are supported by Trafford Council to continue their work, offering consultation and advice to key service leaders in the development of their work, as well as

following up on the pledges of the Civic Commissioners from the original Poverty and Truth Commission.



## Moving forwards

Moving forward, the Trafford Council is focussed on finding further opportunities to embed the Voice of Lived Experience across everything we do, bettering our understanding of how key decisions impact those who are experiencing the hardship of the cost of living crisis. New members have recently been recruited to the panel and a review has been scheduled to refresh the panel's priorities based on any new issues identified by the Community Commissioners.

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