

END OF COMMISSION REPORT

MARCH 2023

TRAFFORD POVERTY TRUTH COMMISSION



**POVERTY
TRUTH** **TRAFFORD**



Friends of
**Stretford
Public Hall**

ABOUT TRAFFORD POVERTY TRUTH COMMISSION



The Trafford Poverty Truth Commission launched in May 2022. It is formed of Commissioners who are residents of Trafford and have lived experience of poverty; and of leaders from the public, private and voluntary sectors in the borough.

Throughout the project we have worked together to form relationships, explore the causes of poverty and its effects, and to develop our ideas for how we can come together as a community to tackle poverty.

We are delighted to be able to share the results of our work with everyone across Trafford and beyond. We have tried to come up with some practical and impactful recommendations, and we invite you to read through, and to join us in putting them into practice.

WHO WE ARE

We are a group of 34 people who care about poverty in Trafford, and want to make things better.

We are 14 Community Commissioners from across Trafford who have lived experience of poverty. We are different ages, backgrounds and have different life experiences. Poverty does not define us, but it is one thing that we share, and we have brought our voices to this project to try to change things for everyone experiencing poverty in Trafford.

"Quite often you feel powerless, but this time I've felt part of something, and like I've got a voice."

Natalie

We are also 20 Civic Commissioners from a variety of public, private and third sector organisations. Our jobs mean that the decisions we make, and the way we go about our work, has an impact on people who experience poverty in Trafford. We have been privileged to take part in the Poverty Truth Commission, and know that we have work to do to make its impact felt in the future. As Commissioners, we have come together as equals to work for change.



"I got involved to hear people's experiences and build that into council decision-making."

Liz

OUR COMMUNITY COMMISSIONERS

We are the Community Commissioners - we have given up our time and shared our stories, so that things might get better for others who experience poverty across Trafford.



David lives in Corse Hill and volunteers in his local community.



Natalie lives in Old Trafford with her son and is involved with several community organisations.



Khatol lives in Old Trafford, helps other people with her translation skills, and works at her local primary school.



Sara lives in Sale West and volunteers at the community centre.



Teresa lives in Stretford and loves spending time with her grandchildren.



Kam Chung was living in Old Trafford and working as a carer. He has now returned to Hong Kong.



Caitlin lives in Partington. She would like to work in childcare.



Dawn lives in Partington with her daughter Caitlin, and volunteers in her community.



Abdul lives in Old Trafford. He is a talented chef and has shared his food with the group.



Claire lives in Partington with her four children and works at the Hideaway.



Lorenza lives in Urmston. She's a great cook and has recently started giving free community cookery classes.



Julie lives in Flixton and looks after her children and grandchildren..



Rebecca lives in Sale West. She is a photographer and volunteers at the community centre.



Maggie lives in Timperley with her children.



Remembering Shona.

Shona was a much-valued member of our Commission. She sadly passed away during the course of our project.

She was passionate about improving life for people living in poverty in Trafford and we hope that she would have been proud of the work we have done.

HOW WE WORKED

The timeline below shows the process we followed in our work.

It doesn't quite capture the friendships we made, the stories we shared and the determination we formed to make a difference to people's lives in Trafford!

Trafford Poverty Truth Commission

We are sharing our recommendations that have been formed since we started work in October 2021.

Our task group key themes were: Connecting Services and Access to Information; Isolation; and the Cost of Living.



"I'm proud that I've been part of the Poverty Truth Commission, and that I could say what I see is wrong, and I would like to make correct."

Khatol

"I've felt comfortable and like I can say what I want to say."

Teresa



OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

We are delighted to share the recommendations of Trafford Poverty Truth Commission. The group would like it noted that we recognise we cannot solve the fundamental causes of poverty, as these solutions lie with central government. However we hope that these recommendations help alleviate the impacts locally.

1 Improve how Trafford residents access services.

We are sharing our recommendations that have been formed since we started in June 2022. Key themes were Connecting Services and Access to Information and Living.

This will include a 'One Stop Shop', where residents can access information and advice, and a 'no wrong door' policy, with a focus on in-person advice, rather than digital tools.

September 2023: The Commission will gather to review progress of the recommendations and pledges

April 2023 - September 2023: Commissioners and partners will work on the recommendations and pledges

June 2022 - October 2022: We worked together as a group to build relationships and identify issues in Trafford

2 Continue to use the voice of people with lived experience in the development of policy and services in Trafford.

The model of the PTC has given many of us a voice for the first time, and given those responsible for key services an opportunity to engage with those who use their services in a meaningful way. We want to see this approach embedded across Trafford.

January 2023: The Commission will work with partners to embed the recommendations and impact

3 Make public transport truly accessible for everyone.

Public transport is a key way to open up opportunity, and to prevent isolation. We want to see the improvements that are being planned in Greater Manchester developed in a way that truly involves people living in poverty so that we can benefit from them.

4 Tackle mental health and isolation.

There is a vicious circle linking poor mental health and poverty, with isolation sitting in the middle. We believe that by valuing mental health in the community, people will feel empowered to link up with their community and feel less isolated.



RECOMMENDATION ONE

IMPROVE HOW RESIDENTS LIVING IN POVERTY ACCESS SERVICES.

Everyone who lives in Trafford is an individual with circumstances and needs that are specific to them. We'd like a system that focuses on people rather than services.

Specific things that we would like to see developed to achieve this are:

A One Stop Shop

We would like to see a 'One Stop Shop' in communities across Trafford, that complements the support currently being provided by the Hubs. This should be principally an in-person service, supported by a phone line and online support with a portal of information. Some of the things the 'One Stop Shop' would do include:

- Help people to navigate 'the system'.
- Raise awareness of benefit entitlements and support available, as we know that many people do not claim the support that they are entitled to, keeping them in poverty.
- Point residents to community resources such as hubs, youth centres and sports clubs.
- Raise awareness of mental health support.
- Point residents to education opportunities.
- Give advice on budgeting and personal finance.

"If we see the One Stop Shop (happen)... that'll make a big difference. And if someone doesn't have to tell their story fifty thousand times, we've achieved something."

Claire

No wrong door

There should be 'no wrong door': those providing frontline services in Trafford need to have the knowledge and ability to refer people to the service(s) they need. This would mean that residents do not have to repeat their story multiple times, as this is upsetting, has a negative impact on mental health, and can lead to people deciding not to pursue the support they need. To make sure this is effective, we suggest:

- An online resource that brings together all the information there is in Trafford regarding benefits, financial support, community support etc. We think this could be an interactive resource pointing people to a whole range of services and support. This would principally be a resource for those providing front line services (rather than for the residents who need support) - as we know the value of having human support in navigating the system, which can be overwhelming, allowing front line workers to have confidence in advising residents.
- There should also be an online tool available to everyone, so that people who are confident using technology to address their needs can access it. An interactive map would be a great way to do this so that residents can quickly access information about a range of support and services such as food, money advice, health and well-being.



"It's been really eye-opening to understand the struggles that people who've not experienced poverty before have in accessing the support that they need."

Ceris

When developing the recommendations, we'd like the council and other partners to bear the following in mind:

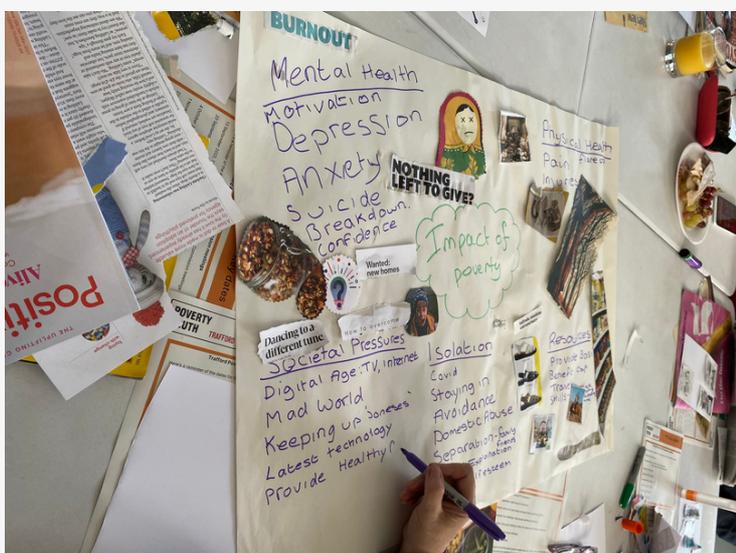
- Consider what can be done to help families with the cost of childcare and early years provision.
- Those who provide healthcare services such as doctors, dentists, and mental health services should look at how easy or difficult it is for patients to access their services and work with them to make sure they are accessible for all.
- Focus community help on those who need it most, e.g. those with health issues, the digitally excluded, older people etc.
- Embed community engagement, by encouraging being a good neighbour and helping each other.
- Provide support with access to food against rising costs.
- We are aware raising awareness may impact the pressures on local services, and hope that this opens the door to more funding, which is key to meeting local needs.

Better information that is easy to access

- Regular newsletters or leaflets in key areas of the community which are kept up-to-date.
- Community noticeboards - both the noticeboards and leaflets/newsletters need to have someone responsible for updating them at least once a quarter.
- A policy of using 'Plain English' in all the information that is produced, so that no one is excluded because they don't understand jargon or corporate language. There should also be translation and interpretation available for people whose first language is not English, and Braille and spoken word versions.

Information Champions for Trafford

'Information Champions' across Trafford who are based in every community in Trafford and who take the lead in making sure all the resources are up to date and relevant. They would also be confident in signposting others to the support that exists, and would form a network across key locations, such as Community Hubs, doctors surgeries, chemists, libraries etc.



Training for frontline workers and policy teams

- Training should be developed and delivered by people with lived experience of poverty, to all front line staff about the impact of poverty so that they understand how their work affects people. This may include the tone and language used, the complexity of the whole system, and an understanding of mental health.
- Our Community Commissioners have volunteered to help develop and deliver this.

"I'm taking away how important it is to be grounded in community, if you work for the council (...) you have to be close to the community, you have to understand the challenges, you have to know how you can influence change, for the people that you are there to serve."

Sara S



RECOMMENDATION TWO

MAKE THE VOICE OF 'LIVED EXPERIENCE' PART OF TRAFFORD'S WAY OF WORKING.

'Nothing about us, without us, is for us,' is the motto of all Poverty Truth Commissions. This is because we believe that people who experience poverty are best placed to understand how it truly impacts their lives. And so, no policy should be made, or service developed, that affects people living in poverty without their input.

This does not mean occasional 'consultations', but rather meaningful engagement where residents are part of the decision-making process. We know that the council and other public sector bodies who serve Trafford are busy and stretched, but we also know that they are full of committed and professional staff who want to deliver the best for Trafford, and we believe that involving residents in this way will help them to do that.

"To begin with, it was harrowing to hear the stories, but then it was about how we respond to that with tangible things we can do to effect positive change."

Andrea

How might this look in Trafford?

- A 'panel' of people with lived experience of poverty could be set up. This panel should be considered a key resource within Trafford, and consulted whenever a new service or policy is being set up. The council's Poverty Action Group could be the principal point of engagement, however, we would like to see the panel engaged across the board, not just when poverty is the main theme or issue, as people experiencing poverty encounter all the council's services. The panel could also advise the Hubs and other service providers beyond the council.
- Actively encouraging people with lived experience of poverty to apply for the roles of Community Champions that we suggested as part of the 'One Stop Shop' service.
- Show the value we place in the contribution of people with lived experience by rewarding them properly for their time and expertise, preferably by paying them money directly, or with vouchers if necessary.

"If you understand lived experiences, you'll have a more open-minded, holistic approach to things."

Lorenza



RECOMMENDATION THREE

IMPROVE PUBLIC TRANSPORT SO THAT PEOPLE LIVING IN POVERTY ARE ABLE TO MAKE FULL USE OF IT.

Public transport came up in almost every conversation we had about poverty in Trafford. Our Commissioners know that it's a vital way to reduce isolation, open up opportunities, and allow people to get to wherever they need to be.

Here are some of the ideas we have for making public transport in Trafford truly a tool to tackle poverty:

- Joint working between the council and TfGM to understand the full journey 'from doorstep to destination.' Many of our Commissioners are reluctant to use the bus or tram because the walk to the stop is dark, intimidating, or unsafe (e.g. there might be slippery leaves in autumn or ice in winter). We know this is a complex piece of work, but if we can really understand what prevents people living in poverty from accessing public transport, we could make a real difference.
- Allow all bus passes to be used all day, not just off-peak. Some passes can't be used early in the morning or late afternoon-onwards. This means that they can't be used to get to medical appointments early or late in the day, and it excludes people with those passes from using them to get to work.
- Make it easier to plan your whole journey if you need to use more than one bus/train/tram line, and planning services so they link up better. Bear in mind that people often travel outside of Greater Manchester and this should be easy and cost the same.

"I already know my part has been successful, because people have listened."
Dawn



RECOMMENDATION FOUR

TACKLE MENTAL HEALTH AND ISOLATION.

'The links between poor mental health and poverty are really apparent. The stress and anxiety caused by poverty can exacerbate existing mental health problems, or create new ones. We believe that isolation is linked to both of these and would like to see this tackled specifically in Trafford.'

We know that there are already a number of brilliant schemes and services in Trafford that help people experiencing isolation and poor mental health. But we'd like to recommend the following:

- Put the impact of poverty on mental health at the forefront of the design of new services such as the 'One Stop Shop.' This means in particular that people are not expected to repeat their story over and over again.
- Prioritise investment in community groups and youth clubs to reduce social isolation. This should include making sure that efforts are made to reach out to those who don't proactively seek out these groups, or may not be aware of them. This could be through a 'buddy' scheme in communities where there are people who are responsible for befriending those who are isolated and helping them to be more involved in the community. This could be led by the Community Hubs with input from the council and others including health services.
- Work across Trafford to increase awareness and reduce stigma around mental health, including in schools and other community spaces.
- Recognise the link between physical and mental health, by improving access to opportunities for fitness and nutrition for people experiencing poverty and isolation in Trafford.
- Set out in one place (online and in physical leaflets) the pathways in Trafford on how to get mental health support from early intervention to crisis.

"You do feel shame that you're going to the food bank, to admit that you're struggling. It takes a lot."

Julie

OUR CIVIC COMMISSIONERS' PLEDGES

THE SECOND WAY IN WHICH WE WANT THE IMPACT OF THE POVERTY TRUTH COMMISSION TO BE FELT LONG-TERM, IS THROUGH THE ACTIONS OF OUR CIVIC COMMISSIONERS.

EACH OF OUR CIVIC COMMISSIONERS HAS MADE A PLEDGE, WHICH WE WILL ASK THEM TO REPORT BACK ON OVER THE NEXT YEAR. WE HOPE THAT THIS WILL MEAN THAT THERE ARE RIPPLES OF INFLUENCE FROM OUR POVERTY TRUTH COMMISSION ACROSS TRAFFORD'S PUBLIC, PRIVATE AND THIRD SECTORS FOR MANY YEARS TO COME!



- TfGM will work with the Council and develop a plan on how representatives would like to contribute, such as through the proposed lived experience panel.
- TfGM considers that many of the points that have come up through the work with the Commission align with current plans (e.g. capped fares; a locally controlled bus network). TfGM will do more to publicise plans for the network, including more targeted engagement.
- TfGM will look at how it can better place information such as timetables and available services/concessions and better advertising of existing services such as the Customer contact line.

Joshua Kay, Senior Policy Officer, TfGM



- Educate children to do whatever we can to improve their life chances and our communities, and abolish poverty in the future.
- Continue to develop ways to support our families through the hardship fund for uniforms and welfare advice and guidance.
- Continue to develop links with Stretford Food Bank and TBBT to support with food poverty in our community.
- Continue to support families with financial advice and guidance through the GMPA.
- Use my enhanced understanding of the impact of poverty to ensure we are a supportive and communicative school.
- Support any ongoing initiatives that come out of the PTC.

Lindsay Brindley, Headteacher, Lostock High School.



Throughout the commission we heard the positive difference social housing makes so we will:

- Build more affordable homes and lobby for more support to increase supply.
- Help people sustain their tenancies and maximise their income.
- Train colleagues in supporting people living in poverty to improve their experience of accessing our services.
- Invite commissioners to join our Charitable Foundation Panel to direct funds to groups and services they feel make a difference.
- Include socio economic factors in our impact assessments when developing new policies and procedures.

Ceris Esplen, Director of Strategy and Partnership, Irwell Valley Homes.



- I pledge to advocate for the voices of the PTC in primary education across Trafford.
- I pledge to support primary schools in Trafford in becoming signposts for the 'One Stop Shop'.

Thomas Johnson,
Headteacher, Seymour Park
Community Primary School.



- I will make sure that information on topics relating to poverty is available in the GP surgery where I work.
- I will make sure that the voice of lived experience of poverty is a priority when setting up the Living Well Service for community mental health in Trafford.

Louise Dalton, Greater
Manchester Mental Health
NHS Foundation Trust.



- Broadoak School will engage with the community, and community commissioners, to maintain our understanding of the real effects of poverty.
- We will endeavour to identify who needs help, and support them in accessing help. We will work towards creating a database of offer and promote this with our families.

John Knowles, Headteacher,
Broadoak School, Partington.



I pledge that in my role in the Greater Manchester Police, I will consider isolation & poverty when I deal with all members of the public that I come into contact with. I will share information with staff about what is available in the community so that they can signpost to the right service for the support they need. I want to ensure that all officers are able to identify poverty & isolation.

Rachel Nutsey, Greater
Manchester Police.



- Continue to ensure benefits advice and support for people with mental health issues is readily available and delivered in a trauma sensitive manner.
- Continue to provide mental health and wellbeing support for Trafford residents who experience emotional and psychological distress.
- Continue to support Trafford Citizens Forum to provide a voice for people who use Mental Health and Wellbeing services in order that their experience informs service improvement.

Stuart Webster, Director, BlueSci.



- I have two pledges, one professional and one personal:
- Professional - to be committed to and ensure that co-design is at the heart of service and policy design and implementation.
 - Personal - to stay active across the communities of Trafford.

Sara Saleh, Deputy Chief
Executive & Corporate Director
of Strategy & Resources, Trafford
Council



As a local councillor I pledge to seek out and elevate the voice of those with lived experience of poverty in Trafford within my decision making.

CLlr Liz Patel, Executive Member for Economy and Regeneration, Trafford Council.



Bruntwood pledges to:

- Work with partners to ensure resources aimed at reducing poverty are available digitally & physically in town centres.
- Make addressing poverty a core tenet of our relationship with the public sector, ensuring it has a place on our agenda, & is included in social impact plans.
- Ensure that town centres include a mix of operators & provision to reflect the needs of the entire community and to cater across the socioeconomic spectrum.

Andrea George, Director for Town Centre and Consumer Brands.



- Raise awareness of older people's mental health and access to services
- Increase older people's access to Information and Advice through outreach
- Provide all age cost of living support via our Urmston Hub
- Provide opportunities for older people to reduce social isolation with engagement activities

Ann Marie Jones, Chief Executive, Age UK Trafford, and Urmston Community Hub.



I pledge to continue the work already started as a direct result of our involvement in the TPTC and to use Lancashire Cricket Foundation as the vehicle to open up Emirates Old Trafford as a 'Community Hub' in order to provide accessible support services for local residents.

Sandy Mitchell, Head of Community Growth, Lancashire Cricket Foundation.



Manchester United Foundation will use the voice of young people to develop future programmes and services. This will involve the creation of Youth Voice Sessions working with people with lived experience in the topic theme. These Youth Voice groups will then feed into a Youth Board that will present ideas to the Trustees, so their voice is heard at all levels in the organisation.

Matt Johnson, Operations Director, Manchester United Foundation



- We pledge to ensure that lived experience is used to design and implement service delivery across Trafford, and more broadly, across our organisation.
- Work with the council to create a 'One Stop Shop' which works for residents.
- Promote internally the wellbeing and resilience support available to colleagues.

Steve Hughes, COO, Citizens Advice, Stockport, Oldham, Rochdale and Trafford.



- To work with the LA and support the "One Stop Shop" in promoting and delivering education opportunities that are accessible to all.
- To create "Community Champions" who will engage with local residents, promote opportunities and understanding and address barriers.
- To further grow and develop our "Community Kitchen" initiative, engaging young people and employers to develop a sustainable model.

Carmen González Eslava, Deputy Principal, Trafford College.



I commit for the rest of my career to be a champion for including the lived experience voice, meaningfully, in service design and review. In my current role, I commit to reviewing our approach to grant making to ensure real connection to need, and involving lived experienced voices in the decision making.

Aileen Edmunds, Head of Social Impact, Trafford Housing Trust.



- Work closely with Healthwatch to include local people's voices in our improvement plans. This will start with their review of occupational therapy to help people live more independently at home.
- Ensure that the development of the One Stop Shop is embedded in the Neighborhood Plans that we are leading on behalf of Trafford Provider Collaborative (Health and Social Care).

Richard Spearing, Managing Director, Trafford Local Care Organisation.



"I've gone back to work inspired, refreshed, and full of energy."

Carmen



- UA92 is running a new course on health and exercise science. As part of this, students need to show they have engaged with local communities. UA92 would like to make sure that local residents experiencing poverty are able to benefit from this through tips/advice on exercise and nutrition (via community groups).
- Expanding awareness of Make It For Real - UA92's programme for students who were eligible for free school meals. The package includes free lunches, a laptop, £150 voucher for home furnishings, phone data and a travel card.

Karim West, Community Engagement Coordinator, UA92.

- Ensure the voice of people with lived experience of poverty continues to be heard and shape future policy and activities in Trafford Leisure.
- With Trafford Council, review the active Trafford Concessionary scheme in place ensuring that the voice of people with lived experience of poverty shape future changes.
- October 17th will become the dedicated day across Trafford Leisure where we will present with our community commissioners currently using the leisure centres about what they would want to see.

Jo Cherrett, Chief Executive, Trafford Leisure.

NEXT STEPS

THE POVERTY TRUTH COMMISSION MAY BE CLOSING, BUT OUR WORK IS ONLY JUST BEGINNING!

"If the suggestions we're making move forward and make things more accessible for people, (...) I think that's really important, that we've got some sort of sustained future from the Commission, moving into the future."

Lindsay



In the initial few months after the Commission closes, we will prioritise our work to embed the voice of lived experience in the way that we work across Trafford. This will include setting up the panel of experts, working alongside our Community Commissioners, and developing and delivering our training offer. We are grateful to our Civic Commissioners for committing their organisations to taking part in this training, and are looking forward to working with them over the coming months.

We also intend to keep track of the impact that our Commission has had - we will be bringing our Commissioners back together at regular points to hear about the progress our Civic Commissioners have made in implementing their pledges; and to check in with the council and other partners on how our recommendations are being implemented. So watch this space!

TEAM MEMBERS AND FUNDING



**CLAIRE VIBERT
(LEFT) AND KATE
HARDING (RIGHT)**

Trafford Poverty Truth Commission was facilitated and coordinated by Claire Vibert and Kate Harding, and the project was overseen by Stretford Public Hall.

Stretford Public Hall is one of the six Community Hubs operating across Trafford, providing support and access to services for local residents. The hall itself is a community-owned building, which is run by Friends of Stretford Public Hall.

Stretford Public Hall is fortunate to have a team of wonderful volunteers, two of whom have supported the Poverty Truth Commission throughout. A big thank you to Barbara and Chris!

Trafford Poverty Truth Commission was funded by Trafford Council and Trafford Housing Trust.

"We would like to thank everyone who has supported Trafford Poverty Truth Commission over the last couple of years. We have been fortunate to have the backing of Trafford Council and a whole range of organisations from across the borough. There is a huge amount of talent and desire to make Trafford a better place for residents experiencing poverty. Most of all we would like to thank our Commissioners, who have been courageous, open, and determined to be part of positive change, not just for themselves, but for everyone in our borough."

The Trafford Poverty Truth Commission Team.

"There is nothing more important to me than hearing the true reality of life for our residents. Harrowing stories can be hard to hear but they really matter. That is why Recommendation Two is THE most important for me. To make real and lasting change we must build things together. Trafford Council and partners are committed to 'nothing about us, without us, is for us.'"

Councillor Joanne Harding,
Executive Member for Culture,
Leisure, and Strategic Partnerships.