



Tackling Poverty Together

in Bedfordshire

[www.tacklingpoverty-beds.org.uk](http://www.tacklingpoverty-beds.org.uk)

# MINUTES OF TPT GROUP MEETING

County Hall, Cauldwell Street, Bedford  
8<sup>th</sup> July 2008

## Present:

Lindsay Mitton (Chair)	Bedfordshire County Council - Economic Growth
Mark Smith	CVS Mid & North Bedfordshire
Peter Doyle	Bedford Credit Union
Liz Stevens	Bedford Credit Union
Jenny Hedges	Mid Beds CAB
Patrick Horn	Mature Citizens' Action Group (Bedford & District)
Len Simkins	Infotrain
Sue Walmsley	Infotrain

## 1. Apologies

Sarah Hughes	Bedfordshire County Council - Economic Growth
Caron Brooks	GO-East
Wendy Anderson Welsh	Bedford Race Equality Council
Steve Hill	Aragon Housing Association
Jackie Hamilton	Mid Beds CAB
Tanya Richardson	Website Consultant

## Action

## 2. Minutes and Matters Arising

- 2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting (4<sup>th</sup> March) were accepted as an accurate record with the following correction:

**Item 7.2:** The minutes stated that **Bedford Credit Union** had been awarded funding to appoint a Development Officer for the Bedford and Kempston area. In fact, the new post of Outreach Development Officer (Liz Stevens) covers the outlying North Beds areas of BCU's Common Bond within a radius of 6 miles from Bedford town centre e.g. Clapham, Renhold, Roxton, Barford etc.

- 2.2 **Matters arising:**

Other matters are on the agenda for this meeting.

## 3. Action Plan 2008/2009

As agreed, the draft Action Plan, which was presented at the last meeting, has been reviewed by Len Simkins and Sarah Hughes. A revised Action Plan was distributed and discussed. The Group agreed to adopt this Action Plan. A copy can be found on the Group's website.

### 3.1 Group Meetings

The question was raised as to whether the TPT Group should return to meeting 4 times a year. It was decided to review this at the next meeting. Each TPT meeting will have a specific focus/theme.

### 3.2 Newsletter

The Group will continue to produce 4 editions of *Poverty News* a year. The latest issue, including a supplement on the Migrant Workers Seminar, was produced in June. The next edition is due in October. Fewer paper copies are being distributed as more and more organisations request electronic versions only. Lindsay stated that Beds County Council no longer requires any paper copies from infotrain as copies are printed off in-house.

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Sue requested that Group members continue to send in items, particularly those with a local bias, which may be of interest to the newsletter. Any items for inclusion in the next edition should be sent to Sue at [sue.walmsley@infotrain.co.uk](mailto:sue.walmsley@infotrain.co.uk) by the end of September.

All

### 3.3 TPT Website

Tanya and Lindsay have been working together to revise the website design/layout. Lindsay showed the revamped home page to the meeting for comments on the design changes.

- Ideally the width of the page should be reduced to allow visitors to see the whole page on one screen.
- The "morph" figures and the jigsaw images were very popular - though perhaps just one "morph" holding a 'What's New' board could be used with a list of items underneath on the home page - and then continue with the little "morphs" on subsequent pages.
- It may be worth asking Sight Concern to comment on the text font size etc. However, it was noted that a "text too small?" facility is built into the home page.
- The colour change was popular.
- A "re-launch" of the site was suggested - sending an email link to all Council Members and other interested organisations/individuals
- The 'links' page needs even more development - need to make sure that all relevant sites are linked and updated.

Lindsay will continue to liaise with Tanya on the further development of the Group's website.

LM/TR

### 3.4 Benefits take-up campaign in Bedford

The "Benefits For All" campaign funded by Bedford Partnership Board was instigated as a result of research carried out by the TPT Group two years ago into the availability of benefits advice.

Partnership working was originally a key element of the campaign. However, with the problems faced by Bedford CAB, which was a key partner, the campaign is effectively now being lead by Bedford Borough Council. In fact, many of the activities seem to be those that the Borough Council would be running anyway. Beds County Council Welfare Rights Service and the Disability Resource Centre are also partners in the campaign, however, it was noted that the latest publicity for forthcoming events (as featured in June's edition of *Poverty News*) only carried the Borough Council's logo.

The Campaign will have a stand at the River Festival (12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> July) and an Advice Fair is planned for 1<sup>st</sup> October at the Harpur Suite in Bedford.

The Campaign will be reviewed at the end of this year when the possibility of continuing the campaign will be discussed.

### 3.5 Development of a credit union in Mid Bedfordshire

Peter Doyle updated the Group on the progress being made towards the establishment of credit union services in Mid Bedfordshire.

Unfortunately the Development Group failed to appoint a Development Officer in June. The post has been re-advertised in the Guardian and on the CVS website last week. The closing date for applications is 20<sup>th</sup> July, so it is likely to be September before a Development Officer will be in place. Len offered to distribute the advert to members of Bedfordshire Advice Forum.

PD/LS

Following several enquiries from potential volunteers, an open evening was arranged in June. The turnout for this evening was disappointing, but the appointment of a Development Officer will be key to recruiting and training volunteers. Mark Smith said that some work was being done to draw up 'job descriptions' for volunteers so some recruitment could take place before a Development Officer is appointed.

Bedford Credit Union (BCU) is looking for suitable premises in Mid Beds. Shefford is looking like a likely area in which to start, but suitable accommodation is necessary.

The Development Group and BCU have developed a detailed business plan for the first year of operation and have set up a Service Level Agreement with Mid Beds District Council for funding from 1<sup>st</sup> September. Funding from Bedfordshire County Council has also been agreed.

The Development Group is planning a "mini launch" of the new service at Aragon Housing's open day on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> September at Flitwick Leisure Centre. Aragon Housing is looking into paying their tenants' membership fees (as BPHA already does with Bedford Credit Union).

Peter and Mark will continue to update the Group on the development of a credit union in Mid Bedfordshire.

## 4. Child Poverty Indicator

- 4.1 Bedfordshire's **Local Area Agreement (LAA)** has been undergoing a 'refresh' over the last 6 months. In the revised LAA child poverty has been included as a local indicator in the LAA. This was one of the recommendations made at the TPT Group's Child Poverty Seminar in December last year.

Len distributed an updated template of "**NI 116 - Proportion of children in poverty**" which sets out a description of the indicator including the reasons for selection of the indicator, an overview of the indicator, target setting information, and a list of the partners supporting this activity.

Katie Theodore of Beds County Council Children's Services has been appointed to lead on this indicator. Len may be involved in planning and facilitation.

The proposed action that needs to be taken is:

- Set-up, launch and facilitate a countywide child poverty network to plan and oversee the development work related to this indicator.
- Conduct research into child poverty and its consequences in Bedfordshire.

- Address the specific issues identified in the child poverty network's development plan and research - this could include: work to promote income maximisation amongst families; promotion of support services available for children/families in poverty; child poverty proofing of local policies/practices (e.g. charging policies for activities/trips in schools).

The fact that child poverty has been included in the LAA is a major breakthrough for the TPT Group. It means that for the first time, the reduction of poverty has been recognised in Bedfordshire's overarching strategy. Inclusion in the LAA by no means guarantees funding for future action, but exclusion would make it much harder.

#### 4.2 New child poverty network and links with TPT Group

Len distributed an update report outlining the background to the child poverty indicator and the proposal for a "child poverty network". Initial suggestions were that the child poverty network could be a "sub-group" of the TPT Group. However, funding issues (TPT is funded by Economic Growth and child poverty network is funded by Children's Services) could complicate this set-up. It was agreed that it is important that the new child poverty network has its own separate identity and membership whilst maintaining strong, informal links to the TPT Group.

Mark raised the question as to what is going to happen in April 2009 when there will be 2 unitary authorities and 2 LAAs? Len responded that this was one of the reasons for the child poverty network to be set up as strongly and swiftly as possible in order that it stands a good chance of surviving any potential split. It is hoped that the new network will be launched in September/October.

### 5. Migrant Workers Seminar - Draft Report & Recommendations

- 5.1 Len distributed a draft copy of the Migrant Workers Seminar Report. The Seminar was a very successful event in terms of delegate bookings, speakers, presentations and delegate feedback.

Len and Lindsay will liaise on the final 'conclusions and recommendations' from the event.

**LS/LM**

Lindsay suggested that the draft report be sent to Mark Allison and the workshop presenters for their comments before distributing the final report.

**Infotrain**

The final report will be distributed by email to all those who took part in the event and to those who sent apologies by the end of this month. The report will also be available on the TPT Group website.

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### 6. Activity Update / Poverty News

- 6.1 The next edition of **Poverty News** will be distributed in October 2008. Please send any items for inclusion to Sue (sue.walmsley@infotrain.co.uk) by the end of September.

**All**

- 6.2 Pat Horn was attending his first TPT Group meeting as representative of the Mature Citizens' Action Group (Bedford & District). MCAG is having an official launch at Bedford Salvation Army Hall in Horne Lane on 21<sup>st</sup> July at 10.30am. Guests at the event include Cllr Nikki Attenborough, Patrick Hall and Frank Cooper, President of the National Pensioners Association. Pat was advised to contact Diana Blackmon regarding the Older Persons' team at County Hall.

## 8. Any Other Business

- 8.1 Pat raised the question of the **future funding of the TPT Group** when the new unitary authorities are formed. It was agreed that this needs to be on the agenda for the next meeting.
- 8.2 **Luton Law Centre** has launched an **Equalities Advice Project** offering free advice and support to people discriminated against because of disability, race, gender, age, religion or belief, or sexual orientation. The advice line (**01582 480745**) is open from 10.30 to 12.30 on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. The project can also take on some casework for people in Bedfordshire in cases of discrimination in access to good and services.
- 8.3 There have been serious funding problems at **Bedford CAB**. A rescue package has been proposed by the national network (Citizens Advice). There will be an EGM of Bedford CAB members on 28<sup>th</sup> July to ratify the take-over of Bedford CAB by Citizens Advice until such time as it can operate as an independent entity again. Bedford CAB continues to be open to the public.

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## 9. Next Meeting

The date of the next Group meeting will be Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2008. The meeting will be held at 10.00am at County Hall, Bedford.

Documents discussed at this meeting can be found at [www.tacklingpoverty-beds.org.uk](http://www.tacklingpoverty-beds.org.uk)

Tackling Poverty together Group meetings are facilitated by Infotrain (Contact: Sue Walmsley on 01234 360607)  
Please contact Sue for further information or copies of any documents discussed at the meeting