



in Bedfordshire
www.tacklingpoverty-beds.org.uk

MINUTES OF TPT GROUP MEETING Bunyan Meeting Free Church, Bedford 4th March 2008

Present:

Sarah Hughes (Chair)	Bedfordshire County Council
Len Simkins	Infotrain
Tanya Richardson	Website Consultant
Mark Smith	CVS Mid & North Bedfordshire
Sue Walmsley	Infotrain
Peter Doyle	Bedford Credit Union
Jackie Hamilton	Mid Bedfordshire CAB
Avinash Mandalia	Bedford Community Rights Centre
Lindsay Mitton	Bedfordshire County Council
Wendy Anderson Welsh	Bedford Race Equality Council
James Hurd	Bedford Borough Council

1. Apologies

Stephanie Bennett	Bedfordshire Primary Care Trust
Philippa Harris	Bedford & District CAB
Caron Brooks	GO-East
Steve Hill	Aragon Housing Association
Sutish Mahrra	Jobcentre Plus

Action

2. Minutes and Matters Arising

2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting (31st October 2007) were accepted as an accurate record.

2.2 Matters arising:

Item 2.2: Sue will ensure that TPT Group minutes are forwarded to David Brewer at County Hall. The next Countywide Assembly meeting will be on 15th May.

Infotrain

All other matters are on the agenda for this meeting.

3. Action Plan 2007/2008 – Review

3.1 Group Meetings

The targets for arranging meetings with specific themes and distributing minutes within 2 weeks of the meetings have been met. The TPT Group will continue to meet 3 times a year.

3.2 Newsletter

Three editions of *Poverty News* have been produced so far this year. The 4th edition will be published in May. *Poverty News* will continue to be produced 4 times a year. The number of paper copies distributed has been reduced as more people request electronic versions only. The distribution list has been reviewed periodically as has the design and layout of the newsletter. Current and past editions of *Poverty News* are available on the TPT Group website.

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 by the end of April. It was suggested that the next newsletter could feature health issues. Sarah, Wendy and Lindsay said they would forward relevant items.

SH
LM
WAW

3.3 TPT Website

Tanya distributed the latest statistics for the Group website activity. The number of visitors achieved so far this year (excluding figures for March) is 143. It is unlikely that the target of 200 visitors will be met. There is a significant increase in visitor numbers when the website includes details of a current event. Details of the forthcoming Migrant Worker Seminar will be included on the website shortly.

Infotrain/
TR

The newsletter page continues to be the most popular, followed by partners & links. The home page now includes a "what's new" section guiding visitors to the relevant webpage. The website now contains a large body of information, reports, statistics, contacts etc. and is a useful resource.

Tanya had recently received suggestions for possible navigational changes to the website. These are:

- Remove the 2005 Conference page and change it to 'past TPT events'
- Change the 'events' page to 'future events'
- Add a 'meetings' page to host minutes etc.

The Group agreed with these suggestions. Tanya will implement them from 1st April to coincide with the new year. Tanya will also look at changing the way that the website statistics are presented.

TR

3.4 Benefits take-up campaign in Bedford

Len distributed Bedford Partnership Board's "Benefits For All" report for the first half year of this campaign. James updated the Group on progress to date and plans for future events.

A series of events has been planned for summer 2008. James will provide full details for the next issue of *Poverty News*. An advice session for advisors primarily on Employment Support Allowance will be held in May. The campaign will have a presence at Bedford's River Festival in July. A public Advice Fair will be held at the Harpur Suite in Bedford on 1st October 2008. James informed the Group that the campaign will also work towards the coordination of outreach services provided in Bedford Borough. For more information on the campaign please contact James at jhurd@bedford.gov.uk

JH

3.5 Development of a credit union in Mid Bedfordshire

An article on the Mid Beds credit union by Jill Dickinson (Mid Beds District Council) and Mark Smith (CVS) was distributed.

The Financial Services Authority (FSA) has agreed to the extension of Bedford Credit Union's (BCU) Common Bond to encompass Mid Bedfordshire. Final negotiations are taking place regarding the Common Bond's map. This will more than double the size of BCU.

Mid Beds District Council has provided a fund of £100,000 over the next three years to develop the credit union in Mid Beds. This will enable BCU to appoint a Development Officer with specific responsibility for Mid Beds. Funding has also been received from Beds County Council and Aragon Housing Association for the first year of development. The first year's development budget has been met in full. Funding for years 2 and 3 is not yet as certain.

As well as recruiting a Mid Beds Development Officer, BCU also needs to establish a volunteer base to staff the credit union, the budget allows for training of volunteers. Training also acts as a team building process which is important to the development of the credit union.

The issue of premises needs to be addressed. At present Mid Beds residents can join the credit union at BCU's Bedford office. It is intended to establish pay-points (e.g. in local shops) in Mid Beds to enable members to pay money into their account. However, withdrawals will have to be made in Bedford. Offers of accommodation have been received in Flitwick and Biggleswade.

The credit union development group and BCU are working with Cranfield University Trust to develop a business plan for the credit union.

The Group expressed satisfaction that a recommendation from the TPT Cost of Debt conference in 2005 has led to such a tangible and positive outcome. Mark and Peter praised the efforts of Jill Dickinson and Cllr Anita Lewis (MBDC) in pushing forward the development of the credit union. Peter and Mark will continue to update the Group on progress.

Sue will update the Action Plan and forward to Tanya for inclusion on the website

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4. Action Plan 2008/2009

4.1 Len and Sarah will liaise to consider the development of an Action Plan for 2008/2009. A draft will be distributed to Group members for comment before the next meeting where the plan will be confirmed. Suggestions for consideration are:

**SH/LS
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- Inclusion of the recommendations from the Child Poverty and Migrant Worker Seminars.
- Consideration of poverty-related issues which may arise for the forthcoming Budget especially regarding the measuring and redefining of child poverty figures.
- Re-design of Group's website. Tanya and Lindsay are planning to discuss this. They will email the Group regarding these changes which will be built into the Group's Action Plan 2008/09

TR/LM

5. Child Poverty Seminar - Report & Recommendations

5.1 Len distributed a copy of the 'Conclusions and Recommendations' section from the Child Poverty Seminar Report. The full report was distributed in January and is available on the TPT Group website.

The main **recommendations** made in the workshops and discussions were that:

- A child poverty network should be set up in Bedfordshire - to bring together the local agencies involved in child poverty and to link in with the national End Child Poverty campaign
- Information on child poverty should be collected centrally in Bedfordshire in a coordinated way
- Child poverty should be publicised, in a coordinated way, in the local area
- There should be improvements in the coordination of local services relating to children and families and increased multi-agency working
- Child poverty should be addressed as an issue in local strategic plans and policies and some degree of "child poverty proofing" should be used when drawing up key strategies and policies.

5.2 The recommendations were discussed. The question was raised as to whether 'yet another' network group was needed - does Beds CPAG not already act as a child poverty network? Len replied that Beds CPAG was a small campaigning group and a "project-based" network was needed.

Len reported that a Stronger Communities Theme Group had been formed as part of the review of the Local Area Agreement (LAA). It is likely that the Group will recommend that tackling child poverty should be adopted as one of the local indicators in the LAA.

It was suggested that the formation of a child poverty network, and the collection of information on child poverty, would be a natural development of child poverty being an LAA target.

It was agreed that Len will write to Janet Ridge (Chair of the Stronger Communities Group). He will pass on details of the recommendations from the child poverty seminar and will suggest that the TPT Group could initially help in the work that will be needed to monitor the LAA local target.

6. Migrant Worker Seminar

6.1 Len distributed an Update Report on the planning of the TPT Group's next event - a Migrant Worker Seminar to be held during the morning of Friday 16th May at the Rufus Centre in Flitwick. The report was discussed and further developments were made to the planning process.

Points raised at this meeting were:

- The aims, outcomes and format of the Seminar were agreed.
- Wendy Anderson Welsh (BREC) agreed to chair the event.
- The seminar needs to include consideration of the community tensions which can arise between older, more established, immigrant communities and newer migrant workers.
- The seminar needs to maintain its focus on social exclusion and poverty issues. However, the seminar aims to give a balanced view of the social and economic impact of migrant workers in Bedfordshire, including the many positive aspects.
- Lindsay will liaise with Steve Ferris of The Learning Partnership regarding the 'education' workshop. This workshop needs focus and definition.

LM

- Avinash (BCRC) will lead a 'first-hand experience' workshop involving members of the migrant worker community. Sue will liaise with Avinash on the focus and definition of this workshop. **AM**
- The event has already been publicised in *Poverty News* and interest has been expressed. Infotrain will develop publicity material and a booking system. The publicity will be distributed to the planning group for confirmation. Delegates will be able to book via the TPT Group website. Publicity will be distributed mainly via email and will make use of Group members' networks. **Infotrain**
- Sarah asked that infotrain look at the financial implications of more than 50 delegates wanting to attend the Seminar. **Infotrain**
- The next meeting of the Seminar Planning Group will be held at 9.30am on 15th April at County Hall, Bedford.

7. Activity Update / *Poverty News*

- 7.1 The next edition of *Poverty News* will be distributed in May 2008. Please forward any items for inclusion to Sue (sue.walmsley@infotrain.co.uk) by the end of April. **All**
- 7.2 **Bedford Credit Union** has been awarded a Big Lottery Grant of £75,000 to fund a Development Officer for the Bedford and Kempston area. The post was advertised in last week's *Beds on Sunday* and generated 30 requests for application packs.
- 7.3 **Changes to the Housing Benefit Scheme from 7th April 2008** - James Hurd distributed leaflets from Bedford Borough Council outlining information for landlords on the changes to Housing Benefit for tenants renting in the private sector. For more information contact: jhurd@bedford.gov.uk

8. Any Other Business

None.

9. Next Meeting

The date of the next Group meeting will be Tuesday 1st July 2008. The meeting will be held at 10.00am at County Hall, Bedford.

NB: The date of the next meeting was later changed to **Tuesday 8th July 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

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