



Tackling Poverty Together

in Bedfordshire
www.tacklingpoverty-beds.org.uk

TPT GROUP - MINUTES OF MEETING

5th November 2009

Borough Hall, Bedford

Present:

Lindsay Mitton
Sarah Hughes
Len Simkins
Peter Doyle
James Hurd
Mark Smith
Tanya Richardson
Jackie Hamilton
Katie Williams
Susannah Rastall

Bedford Borough Council – Economic Growth (Chair)
Central Bedfordshire Council – Regeneration & Skills
Infotrain
Bedford Credit Union
Bedford Borough Council – Benefits & Community Welfare
Community Voluntary Service
Website Consultant
Mid Beds CAB
Bedford Borough Council – 0-19 Integrated Services
Infotrain (Minutes)

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Action</i>
1 Apologies		
Anona Hoyle Glenis Orkisz Michele Collins Nicky Dahl Helen Nottingham Sue Tyler	Bedford Borough Council - Community Welfare Team BREC Aragon Housing Association BPHA – Community Development Voluntary & Community Action Central Bedfordshire Council – Early Childhood Intervention & Prevention	
2 Minutes and Matters Arising		
2.1 Previous minutes	The minutes of the previous meeting (25 th June 2009) were agreed.	
2.2 Matters arising	Len confirmed that 'tackling poverty' is included as an aim in Bedford Borough's Sustainable Community Strategy.	
3 Review of TPT Group	Len gave out an overview of the Group's activities for 2009/10. It was agreed that this was a transitional year for the TPT Group following LGR.	
3.1 Future options	The ongoing future of the group needs to be decided and the following options were put forward for discussion: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. TPT Group stays countywide and develops links with new child poverty groups in Bedford and Central Bedfordshire. 2. TPT Group divides into separate Bedford and Central Beds TPT Groups and develops links with new child poverty groups in Bedford and Central Beds. 3. TPT Group is dissolved and a new group is formed in Bedford Borough to take over the TPT function and that of managing NI 116. Similar arrangements may need to be set up in Central Beds. 4. TPT Group is dissolved and not replaced 	

3.2 Future strategic approach to tackling poverty in Bedford Borough

Sarah agreed that future funding could be difficult for the TPT Group in its present form. The two local authorities will have diverging policies as time goes on. Lindsay confirmed that each authority is looking at different strategies and if the TPT Group remains countywide it may become just an information exchange forum. It was noted that membership is currently spread throughout the county although attendance tends to be mainly from Bedford.

Katie Williams (Assistant Director, 0-19 Integrated Services) gave a presentation on a proposal to change the strategic approach to tackling poverty work in Bedford Borough.

The presentation covered the background to the Countywide Child Poverty Network which was formed in 2008 but was dissolved in June 2009 following LGR. Katie also talked about the possibility of developing a new Poverty Advisory Group (ie Option 3 under 3.1).

The reasons for this proposed change include:

- Poverty is a **cross-cutting issue** that links with a range of other strategic themes
- Child Poverty Bill will make tackling child poverty a **legal duty**
- It would **avoid having two poverty networks** (Bedford Child Poverty Group and the TPT Group)

A new **Poverty Advisory Group** could be created to bring together all poverty discussions and issues. This could still report to the Social Inclusion Thematic Partnership (for **NI 116** purposes) but it would also link directly with the Partnership Board. **Sub-groups** could work on specific poverty issues eg child poverty, pensioner poverty etc

The **Poverty Advisory Group** would:

- Be a high level strategic group
- Have direct links with the Bedford Borough Partnership Board
- Bring together all poverty discussions and issues – and be responsible for developing the Borough's anti-poverty strategies
- Avoid duplication of poverty networks
- Create links with other Thematic Partnerships
- Encourage funding from a variety of partners – not just from Economic Growth

Len pointed out that although the creation of a Poverty Advisory Group would mean that the TPT Group would no longer be needed (in Bedford Borough), this fits in with the TPT Group's original vision of the need for a high level poverty group that would have a strong strategic influence. Len distributed a diagram showing the TPT Group's vision in 1999. The TPT Group would therefore have successfully achieved its original aim.

Following the presentation the general conclusion amongst the TPT members present was that the proposal would be a sensible move forward. However, there were some concerns regarding some issues.

The concerns were that:

- The new strategic Task Group would need to have Terms of Reference that allowed sufficient input and influence from any sub-groups that were formed - as practitioners would attend these meetings
- The proposal did not mention some of the practical work of the TPT Group eg newsletter (*Poverty News*) and the TPT website - it will be important for this work to continue
- Even with separate strategic arrangements in Bedford Borough and Central Beds, there would still be a demand for some networking & information exchange on a countywide basis – possibly also including Luton. Perhaps a countywide conference could be arranged to meet this need every year or so?

Some joint funding across the councils may be possible for some of the above activities eg *Poverty News*, a poverty conference

Sarah said there was a good practice example in Cornwall regarding tackling child poverty. She will send details to Tanya to go on the TPT website.

Sarah

4	TPT Group Action Plan 2009/10	It was agreed that 2009/10 would be a transitional year while discussions take place as to how the TPT Group will evolve in the future.
4.1	Membership	The review of membership that was proposed at the last meeting will be postponed until it is clearer which future option for the TPT Group is chosen.
4.2	<i>Poverty News</i>	Susannah distributed copies of the November edition. Those present felt the newsletter is a very useful way of keeping members informed of poverty issues locally and nationally. Funding for this needs to be agreed in the long term.
4.3	Website	Funding for the website needs to be reviewed. Tanya confirmed that she would be quite happy for the website to be managed and hosted by someone else from April 2010. There are approximately 20 visits a month to the TPT website. Tanya gave out the usage statistics.
4.4	Future projects / events	It was agreed to suspend all discussions on future events and projects until the future of the TPT Group has been decided.

5	Local Area Agreements - update	
5.1	NI116 – Proportion of children in poverty	Central Bedfordshire is now developing its own strategy and has set up a Child Poverty Strategy Group. In Bedford Borough the future strategic approach is still to be confirmed (see 3.2 above).
5.2	NI152 – Working age people on out of work benefits	The original target for this indicator has been suspended due to the recession.

Sarah pointed out that, in Central Beds, the actual numbers of people returning back to work is high even though overall unemployment is rising.

In Bedford Borough Lindsay admitted that they were under pressure to develop a delivery plan that could really make a difference.

6 Bedfordshire Financial Capability Forum

Jackie confirmed that the launch of the Forum on 30th June had been very successful.

“Nationwide Money Active” has provided funding to enable Bedfordshire CABs to recruit 20 new volunteers.

The next meeting of the Forum will be on 19th November at Priory House, Chicksands.

7 Economic Crisis – support for advice agencies

The Bedfordshire Redundancy Support Group has recently given awards worth £43,000 to advice agencies to support the rise in demand for services around debt and benefits advice. A summary of these awards was listed in the latest edition of *Poverty News*.

8 Information Exchange

BRASS Mark confirmed that BRASS has taken over the building formerly used by Bedford Community Rights Centre at **27B Tavistock Street, Bedford**. BREC are planning to use some of the space available. Brian Cunningham is the new coordinator at BRASS.

Community Voluntary Service Mark informed the group that **SportsTraid**, a new youth-focused sports organisation, will be opening the UK’s first used sports kit shop some time in December. An article on SportsTraid has been put in *Poverty News*.

Bedford Credit Union Peter confirmed that the **BCU's expanded service** in Central Beds (in the old Mid Beds area) now has a 140 members – the target is 200. Aragon Housing Association will shortly be introducing a payroll deduction scheme linked to the Credit Union. Also there are active plans to start a collection point in Biggleswade.

Bedford Borough Council - Benefits and Community Welfare James confirmed that **Housing Benefit** can now be paid into credit union accounts. He also reported a 6% increase in Housing Benefit claims over the past year.

Mid Beds CAB Jackie said that the **new Gateway service** at the CAB offices was working very well and was cutting down waiting times for people needing advice.

Bedford Borough Council – Regeneration & Economic Growth Lindsay highlighted the consultation on priorities for 2010/11 for the **EEDA and Bedford Borough Economic Participation Programme**. £311,582 has been allocated by EEDA to support this programme and a final plan on how this funding will be allocated locally needs to be confirmed by January. Lindsay will send the EP consultation document to Len for circulation to TPT Group members for comments by 12th November.

Lindsay
Len

Lindsay also reported that funding from the **DWP Future Jobs fund** has helped create 90 jobs which will be starting in January 2010

Central Bedfordshire –
Regeneration and Skills

Sarah confirmed that Central Bedfordshire has also received an **Economic Participation Grant** for 2010/11 of £311,000 and an investment strategy needs to be submitted to EEDA by 31st December. Sarah will send Len the EP consultation document to circulate to TPT members for comments by 12th November.

Sarah
Len

The **DWP Future Jobs fund** has also been very successful in providing new jobs for young people, and in 2010 there will be a 6 month programme to help young people into work in response to the recession.

Bedfordshire Advice Forum

Len gave an update on recent BAF activities. The **on-line BAF Directory** and the report on the **research with Children's Centres** will be ready at the end of the month.

It was also hoped that a commitment to develop an **advice strategy** in the new local authority areas will be obtained shortly.

9	Any other business	None
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10	Date of next meeting	23 rd February at 10.00am. The meeting will be hosted by Central Bedfordshire Council
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Documents discussed at this meeting can be found at www.tacklingpoverty-beds.org.uk

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