



Tackling Poverty Together

in Bedfordshire
www.tacklingpoverty-beds.org.uk

TPT GROUP - MINUTES OF MEETING

25th June 2009

Melbourne House, Melbourne Street, Bedford

Present:

Sarah Hughes
Len Simkins
Lindsay Mitton
Mark Smith
Trevor Larder
Nicky Dahl
Karen Cook
Tanya Richardson
Jackie Hamilton
Glenis Orkisz
David Brewer
Susannah Rastall

Central Bedfordshire Council – Regeneration & Skills (Chair)
Infotrain
Bedford Borough Council - Economic Growth
Community Voluntary Service
Bedford Credit Union
BPHA
Bedford Borough Council – Benefits and Community Welfare Service
Website Consultant
Mid Beds CAB
Bedford Race Equality Council
Bedford Borough Council
Infotrain (Minutes)

	Topic	Subject	Action
1	Apologies	Anona Hoyle – Bedford Borough Council Peter Doyle – Bedford Credit Union Jenny Hedges – Mid Beds CAB	
2	Minutes and Matters Arising		
2.1	Previous minutes	The minutes of the previous meeting (3 rd March 2009) were distributed.	
2.2	Matters arising	No matters arising	
3	Bedford Borough's Sustainable Community Strategy	<p>Presentation by David Brewer, Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement at Bedford Borough Council.</p> <p>David gave an outline of the Strategy which sets the aims and ambitions for partners in Bedford Borough. The strategy is still out for consultation but the deadline for responses will be early July.</p> <p>There are 7 themes with 4 to 6 key aims in each and these aims will set the priorities for the Borough. David felt that the strategy showed a reasonable reflection of poverty issues in the different themes.</p> <p>David confirmed that there had been a positive response to the consultation questionnaire. The two main groups that have been the most keen to engage in the process have been BME groups and groups concerned with poverty issues. David has presented the strategy to various community groups within Bedford and is also meeting Parish Councillors to ensure the issues of the rural communities in Bedford Borough are taken into account.</p> <p>Len had received feedback that the Borough's consultative approach had been well received. He also felt that the TPT Group should endorse the general text of the strategy given that tackling poverty is mentioned throughout the document.</p>	

David confirmed that delivery plans for the Borough will underpin the Strategy. The LAA plans are one part of this but there will be many others. The aim is to have a comprehensive set of delivery plans and confirmed resources in place by January 2010. In March 2010 the Bedford Borough Partnership Board will start to monitor these delivery plans to ensure they going ahead.

David also confirmed that the strategy needed to be more recognisable as a unique strategy for Bedford Borough and that the time-frames needed to be clear.

Sarah pointed out that getting back to work will not inevitably end poverty for some families because many people move into low paid jobs. It was generally agreed that the first chapter of the strategy could include more about poverty especially given the economic climate.

Lindsay suggested there ought to be some sort of poverty proofing for strategies like this. David confirmed that there will be a "rural proofing" following presentation to Bedfordshire Rural Affairs Forum.

David was thanked for his presentation.

4 Bedfordshire Financial Capability Forum

Jackie Hamilton of Mid Beds CAB gave a presentation on the launch of the new Forum.

The aim of the Forum is to train and educate people on how to deal with debt and become more financially capable. The CABx has seen a large increase in clients with money problems and it is now accepted that many people are not equipped to cope with the modern complexity of financial products.

The Forum, which covers Bedfordshire and Luton, is being led by Mid Beds CAB with EEDA providing funding. The Forum is open to all agencies involved in money/debt issues - and is linked to the East of England Financial Capability Forum. Luton and Bedford CABx are providing the financial capability training as part of the project.

The official launch of the Forum will be on 30th June and Jackie will report back to the TPT Group on future developments at the next meeting. Information from the Forum could feed into other groups that have access to resources to combat the problems of debt.

Jackie was asked by the Group to review the Bedford Community Strategy for reference to debt/financial issues as this is a big and growing problem in the community and prevention and/or reduction of debt ought to be included within the document. Jackie will liaise with Len and Lindsay on this.

5 Action Plan 2009/2010

A paper on future plans for the TPT was circulated by Len Simkins. This gave an overview of the role and aims of the TPT Group.

5.1 New Funding Arrangements

For the next year the Group will be funded jointly by Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire Councils. Bedford Borough will fund the website and Central Bedfordshire will fund the administration of the Group and "Poverty News".

5.2	Group Meetings	3 meetings will be held each year with the venue rotated between Central Bedfordshire and Bedford. Chairing will be rotated between Sarah and Lindsay.	
5.3	Membership	The Group membership list will be updated by Infotrain. Len to send an email to the current membership to ask if there are any other organisations that ought to join the Group.	LS
		It was noted that there are no faith groups in the TPT Group. Also members from the Health sector have not been coming to the meetings – Len will make enquiries as to why this is the case when updating the membership list.	LS
		Lindsay suggested a short questionnaire be sent to members to ascertain their views on the future role and aims of the TPT Group.	
5.4	Poverty News	The newsletter will continue in the same format on a quarterly basis. The mailing list will be updated following LGR.	
5.5	Website	Tanya confirmed that there have not been many visitors – a few a week. The TPT needs to encourage greater use of the website. It was agreed that once a month a reminder should be sent out to members of the TPT Group and interested parties about new information on the website.	LS
		Members also need to check that the information on their agency is correct and to update Tanya of any new information that could be included on the site.	
		Len to write an article about the website and the TPT Group for the July issue of Bedspread to publicise the site. It could also be used in the BREC newsletter	LS
5.6	Future TPT Projects and Events	It was agreed to focus on the future of the Group and its role at the next meeting. Len to update the Terms of Reference for the meeting.	LS
	<i>Conference on effects of the recession</i>	A possible future TPT event could cover the effects of the economic downturn. A conference would be an opportunity to bring together the Councils, voluntary sector and community groups and networks, such as the Women’s Forum, to share the effects of the recession on different groups within the community and the consequent increase in work for the voluntary and advice services.	
	<i>Digital electronic exclusion</i>	Another option for an event would be to discuss access or lack of access to modern technology for poorer and more vulnerable members of the community and the effect this has on inclusion in everyday life in the modern age.	
		Len suggested mapping different forums and networks that work in the poverty related field in order to give a visual map of all the different groups and their relationship to each other. Nicky agreed this would be extremely helpful. Len to contact Nicky in order to work on this together.	LS/ND
6	LAA update on poverty related indicators		
6.1	NI 116 – Proportion of children in poverty	Len confirmed that there are to be regular updates of the work that is going ahead through Bedfordshire’s Child Poverty Task Group and Network on the TPT website and in Poverty News.	

The Delivery Plan for N116 will involve more 'physical' actions to tackle child poverty rather than concentrating on statistical targets.

6.2 NI 152 – Working age people on out of work benefits

The target for this delivery plan has also been suspended due to the increase in worklessness following the economic downturn; however performance will still be monitored and reported.

Sarah reported that Job Centre Plus in Central Beds has supported over 3,000 people back to work in 2008/09 and is doing very well in terms of targets despite the recession.

Sarah also reported that there is possible funding available from the DWP Future Jobs Fund. This Fund has been created by the Government and local authorities and other organisations can bid for funding to create new jobs. This is a new approach to create work and provide hope for young people and jobseekers in deprived communities.

7 Economic Crisis – funding for frontline advice agencies

A full report on the projects funded by the former County Council has been finalised and due to the success of the projects it is hoped that funding can be found for similar activities in the near future.

Sarah confirmed she is working with the Redundancy Support Group where extra funds should be available for use by frontline advice agencies dealing with clients affected by the economic crisis. Extra funds may also be available for training purposes.

8 Information Exchange

Bedford Borough Council – Benefits and Community Welfare Service

Karen reported that from September a new electronic system entitled **e-benefits** for submitting benefits claims by the Council will be in place. This is government funded and should help increase the speed of claims being put through the system.

Karen also confirmed that the benefits caseload had increased from 11,000 in 2008 to 15,000 in 2009 to date.

BPHA Nicky informed the group that the Money Advice Team has only had a 5% increase in its workload but the size of debts is becoming greater. There is also an increasing need for help in filling in forms.

Nicky advised that the co-financing bid from the ESF, for the tackling worklessness project, is on target as outlined in the minutes of the last TPT Group meeting.

BPHA are also developing a Financial Inclusion Strategy.

BREC Glenis highlighted the need for training on benefits for EU and EEA nationals. This is specialist training and initial research indicates that this could be provided at a cost of £1500 and could be delivered through BAF. Sarah advised that if a bid for RSG funding is to be successful it should be presented as a need related to the recession – Glenis reconfirmed that this need for training has come to light because of the recession and EU/EEA nationals losing work.

Glenis also reported that there had been an increase in people wanting advice on employment issues at BREC.

BRASS Glenis confirmed that the main wave of immigration is now coming from Zimbabwe.

Mid Beds CAB Jackie reported that an outreach worker will be working at Orchard Children's Centre in Shefford – this is a pilot scheme taking effect from July.

CVS Mark confirmed that the recent Funding Fayre in Bedford was a success with 225 people through the doors. Mark also informed the group of the new Consortico Company which is made up of a consortium of groups with the aim of being used as a vehicle for voluntary groups to tender for funding.

The Abbey Charitable Trust can also grant money to advice agencies in the money advice sector. Possible funding from this source could help the Bedford Credit Union. It seems that there has not been much take-up of this funding.

Mid Beds Credit Union Mark reported the Mid Beds Credit Union is on target and working towards opening a new collection point in Biggleswade.

BAF Len confirmed that BAF had approached both new councils suggesting the need for an advice strategy and this is now moving ahead.

A funding bid has also been put in by BAF to try to resurrect BRIEF (Bedfordshire Rights Information Exchange Forum) which is now defunct following LGR.

9	Any other Business	Sarah asked if everyone was aware that it was "Pover-Tee Day". Unfortunately this was not widely known.
10	Date of next meeting	Thursday 5 th November at 10.00 – to be hosted by Bedford Borough - Lindsay to confirm the venue

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.