

Report subject	Access to services principles: Poverty Truth Commission
Meeting date	21 October 2024
Status	Public report
Executive summary	<p>BCP Council was the first area in the south to host a Poverty Truth Commission, which ran from 2021 to 2023. One of the starting points for Commissions is 'nothing about us, without us, is for us'. This means that lasting change in improving social justice only happens when people experiencing struggle take part fully in generating that change. One of the themes the BCP Council commission focused on was 'Humanising the Process'. This was a recognition that often people with complex struggles including poverty find it difficult to access the support they need from public services. Barriers include not being listened to, or being passed between services. Sometimes appointments are made at times that make it difficult for people to attend. There is often a lack of flexibility in working with the person.</p> <p>The Board is asked to consider adopting a set of principles developed by the national Poverty Truth Commission Network, based on experiences from many Commissions, design to help improve the planning and deliver of public services.</p>
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Board members consider adopting the access to services principles (appendix A). 2) Members are also asked to share these principles with their own organisations, especially where transformation work is taking place involving contact with customers, appointments, assessments and other services.

Reason for recommendations	<p>Access to services can present significant barriers, especially to people living with complex needs including poverty, mental health or long term physical health conditions. It has been shown that these barriers can be an important contributory factor to inequalities in health, arising because of delays, misunderstandings or mistrust of public services.</p> <p>The Health and Wellbeing Board must pay due regard to the ICP strategy in its work. This encourages the development of person-centred approaches where possible, to help tackle inequalities in health. There is currently an important programme underway to develop integrated neighbourhood teams, for example. Adopting these principles, and asking Member organisations to consider them when designing and transforming services for people will ensure a whole person and community approach is embedded in our services including neighbourhood teams. It should help more people feel supported, build trusting relationships and lead to fewer missed appointments, delays in care and misunderstandings.</p>
Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor David Brown, Portfolio Holder Health and Wellbeing
Corporate Director	Jillian Kay, Director of Wellbeing
Contributors	Sam Crowe, Director of Public Health
Wards	All Wards
Classification	For Recommendation

Background

1. BCP Council was involved in the establishment of the first Poverty Truth Commission in the south of England, which ran from 2021 to 2023. Commissions bring together 12 community commissioners with experience of poverty and other struggles, to join 12 civic and business commissioners to build relationships and work through challenges together.
2. One of the themes that emerged from the Commission in BCP Council was 'Humanising the Process'. This was based on hearing people's experiences of what it felt like when services don't work well, fail to listen or take the whole person into account. From this we built up a list of principles that underpin what a service would look like, if it was to treat all people with dignity and respect, listen to their needs, and be more responsive to making small adjustments that could lead to better outcomes for all.
3. Similar themes have emerged from Poverty Truth Commissions all over the UK. These have been brought together and formed into a set of principles by the National Poverty Truth Commission Network. They have developed 5 principles from this work which, if adopted and worked through with people experiencing poverty and other challenges, should improve relationships, outcomes, efficiency and satisfaction with services. Above all, these principles should improve people's confidence in making changes that will improve their lives, through building trust and respect.

How might the principles be used?

4. Many public sector organisations are undergoing a time of substantial change. Whether this is transforming customer services and contact centres, developing new models of care, or understanding how to remove barriers to accessing services, often the work is done by professionals. We often talk about co-production, recognising that working with people with direct experience of important issues can deliver a better result, identify important perspectives that can be overlooked, and result in better services.
5. Considering these principles as part of any re-design work, or transformation, would mean embedding a way of working that is focused on building relationships, recognising people's strengths, and making adjustments where needed to ensure they are able to benefit fully. However, this works best when these principles are worked through together with people who are experts by their experience.
6. There are a number of community commissioners who have volunteered to remain involved in embedding work locally, even though the first Commission has ended. This offer includes looking for opportunities to humanise services, or act as mentors

to professionals and local leaders involved in change where there is the potential to truly change to an integrated, person-centred approach.

7. One simple example of using the principles might be to workshop what changes would need to happen in a service, in order to be delivering in line with the principles. This would work best as a relational conversation between people with lived experience of what it feels like when services don't work in this way, and local leaders and teams involved in the change.

Summary of financial implications

8. There are no financial implications to note

Summary of legal implications

9. No direct legal implications. However, statutory organisations represented on the Board (NHS, upper tier local authorities) have a legal duty to improve health and reduce inequalities in health, which adopting these principles can help with.

Summary of human resources implications

10. There are no human resources implications to note.

Summary of environmental impact

11. There are no environmental implications to note

Summary of public health implications

12. Adopting principles that encourage genuine person-centred approaches will reduce some of the barriers to accessing service faced by people who are most disadvantaged, including through poverty. This in turn will help reduce inequalities in health, an important public health objective.

Summary of equality implications

13. Adopting these principles will contribute to equality by ensuring everyone is treated with dignity and respect. This reduces the risk of exclusion and discrimination.

Summary of risk assessment

14. HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: LOW

Residual Risk: LOW

Background papers

Appendix One: Access to service principles, Poverty Truth Commission