**Poverty Watch Meeting Notes**

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**20 JUNE 2012**

**Campbell Robb, CEO, Shelter – Highlights**

* People faced with moving because of the housing benefit cuts will not move until they are made to move, people will try everything to stay in the area such as moving in with family, borrowing money etc. This is only storing up problems for these families for the future.
* Reaction to changes will be incremental as people seek to stay in their homes or in the area, debt will increase as a result.
* People will accumulate debt over time, borrowing from friends, family and high interest lenders.
* The level for people getting into the social care ladder is getting higher and also varies across the country. It is therefore a concern that people having to move because of the housing benefit cuts used to getting a certain level of support in an area may not be eligible for that same level of support in another area.
* Shelter is tracking their website traffic, traffic has increased significantly since the housing benefit cuts with people looking for advice.
* Shelter will be carrying out a longitudinal study to monitor impact of housing benefit changes, particularly the impact on in-work benefit people.

**Advice to Poverty Watch**

* The Mayor of London understands the economic impact of people loosing housing benefit and the impact it will have on London, so aim to influence the Mayor and policies for London.
* This will mean joining up as much as possible across London to co-ordinate evidence building.
* Campaigning against the austerity measures in this environment is very challenging as it can be viewed as being a ‘trouble maker’. Find what works locally in terms of providing a commentary on what’s happening on the ground to councillors.
* Aim not to focus just on media stereotypes for evidence but use evidence of in-work families, pensioners for example.

**Child Poverty Action Group**

* CPAG is looking into what is happening with the development of council’s child poverty strategy. They are also doing research on the impact on the loss of the social fund. They will do a snap shot in October and again in February, findings will be shared with Poverty Watch.

**Further concerns/questions**

* There are concerns that the changes will also impact on people being able to pay their

 energy bills.

* There may be an impact on people’s mental health – can the work of Poverty Watch feed into mental health team?
* What are Housing Associations doing in reaction to the changes?
* Direct Housing Payment – what is the maximum amount being awarded? Can DHP budget be influenced locally to ensure that residents receive appropriate level of support?

**Actions**

* CB to ask for meeting with Housing to discuss DHP
* Siobhan to meet with Dee (Lancaster West) to find stories on income deprivation.
* CB and AS will feed evidence into Health and Wellbeing – Task and Finish Group meeting which is looking at the health impact of cuts on local residents.
* Poverty Watch to establish knowledge base, Charles to work with Antonia (ADKC) on this. Kate (CPAG) will send report on what they have done.
* ADKC is looking at the effects of changes on personal budgets. They are also drafting a response on the scrapping of the Independent Living Allowance.
* Members to feed more evidence on overcrowding as more anecdotal evidence needed.

**CAB Case Studies**

1. Client single man aged 60 is unemployed and receiving income of £400 per month. Lives in a shared room in private hostel. Due to cap client has a shortfall of £4.00 pw. Client went to seek advice from CAB as rent went up in April, however housing unable to claim until end of housing benefit anniversary in July. Therefore he has to make up the shortfall. The claimant states that he does not have to move but has incurred rent arrears. Landlord will not reduce the rent but has given no indication yet that he has to move. Person has applied for DDP awaiting result.