

Using lived experience and stories to leverage local change



Kirklees Council

Director of Public Health

Annual Report 2022/2023: Poverty Matters



This report focuses on the lived experiences of poverty for Kirklees residents. We were clear from the outset - the health and social care system cannot understand and address the issues presented by poverty unless we involved the real experts; those with direct experience of poverty themselves.

Throughout winter 2022/23 we had extensive conversations with 12 Kirklees residents. We wanted to know how people were coping. Was the system working for them? How could it be improved?



We worked with social prescribers and local area co-ordinators to support participants throughout the process. We also spoke to local organisations to understand the support they were providing to communities and individuals.

Common themes included:

- Household bills and finances
- Food (particularly skipping meals and buying out-of-date food)
- Housing (particularly issues with landlord, rent and damp/mould)
- Mental health and social isolation
- Travel costs and lack of work opportunities



“Not being able to work and not having that financial freedom, because you’ve only got a set amount of money, is absolutely horrendous”

“I’ve literally been watching my smart meter all the time... I’m not putting any lights on, just using candles, and using a hot water bottle”

“There’s just a cost hanging over everything you do... It just makes you feel a bit more reclusive”

“Where are we supposed to find this money?”

“We have one meal a day... we are skipping lunch”

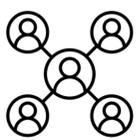
“It’s a lot harder to see the light when you’re this far down”



We used a new approach for the report; developing an animation to represent the voices of the participants and putting stories front and centre. Recommendations were developed from these conversations and include a call to action for those in the wider health and care system, individuals and organisations.



These tangible system-wide actions will help to ameliorate the impact of poverty in Kirklees, and include recommendations around income maximisation, poverty informed practice and systems change for everyone working with residents of Kirklees.



The project used a different way of collaborating with communities: conducting conversations with people via existing relationships with local area coordinators and social prescribers.

DPH Report available here: www.kirklees.gov.uk/povertymatters (or scan QR code ->)

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