

# Member Briefing

Number: 1117

**Title:** West Cheshire Poverty Truth Commission

**Summary:** Update on the West Cheshire Poverty Truth Commission, including the House of Commons event in January 2018 and the celebratory event in February 2018.

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## Background

Cheshire West and Chester Council launched the West Cheshire Poverty Truth Commission (WCPTC) in February 2017. The Commission brings together some of Cheshire West and Chester's key decision makers with those living at the sharp end of poverty, the Community Inspirers.

The WCPTC works towards overcoming poverty in Cheshire West and Chester, ensuring that those affected by decisions are central to the decision-making. The Commission believes poverty will only be truly addressed when those who experience it first-hand are at the heart of the process. Poverty Truth Commissions began in Scotland and have since been created in Leeds, Wolverhampton and Salford. West Cheshire is only the fourth to launch in the UK. Poverty Truth Commissions develop from the belief that real progress towards overcoming poverty will be made when those who hold experience of poverty are central to the development, delivery and analysis of solutions.

The launch event in February 2017 enabled the Community Inspirers to share their stories with an audience of civic, businesses, voluntary and faith leaders and key decision makers who are best suited to identify and implement the necessary changes. Three emerging themes were agreed as key priorities with a sub-group of commissioners working on each theme.

- Mental health – the impact poverty has on an individual's mental health and vice versa.
- Person centred approach – how do experiences make people feel and what effect do these experiences have on their dignity?
- Benefit systems – supporting people to navigate current systems and as and when they change in the future, such as the introduction of Universal Credit.

Each sub-group is co-chaired by a Community Inspirer and a civic and/or business leader. They meet regularly with clear action plans in place, looking at processes, problems with systems and potential solutions.

Community Inspirers from the benefit systems group have been invited to the House of Commons in January 2018 to share their own experiences on the impact of Welfare Reform. The Community Inspirers will share their lived experiences of benefit sanctions, universal credit and PIP assessments, highlighting the processes and barriers to the processes as well as suggesting possible solutions to improve current systems and processes.

Justin Madders MP is sponsoring the event and has formally invited MPs to the West Cheshire Poverty Truth Commission event at the House of Commons on Tuesday 30

January. The event is also supported by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (an independent organisation looking at the underlying causes of poverty and finding solutions).

The West Cheshire Poverty Truth Commission is also organising a celebration event on 28 February at Chester Race Course to highlight the progress and achievement of the commission over the past year, the development of the key themes and the Community Inspirers' journey along the way.

Visit: [cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/news-and-views/campaigns/west-cheshire-poverty-truth-commission.aspx](http://cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/news-and-views/campaigns/west-cheshire-poverty-truth-commission.aspx)

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**Responsible Committee, Cabinet Member:** Councillor Nicole Meardon

**Date:** 30 November 2017