

## Poverty Truth Introduction

We are delighted that you are interested in establishing a Poverty Truth Commission (PTC). PTCs start with the underlying understanding that lasting social change only happens when those who experience the struggle participate in generating change. The Black Civil Rights Movement in the USA would not have made progress had white people dominated its leadership. Similarly, the Feminist Movement would not have achieved what it has, had men been running the show. And so, a movement to tackle poverty needs to have people who experience it at its heart if real change is to be achieved. **Nothing about Us without Us is for Us.**

## The Story so Far

PTCs around the UK operate with a very similar model, underpinned by the same principles. They both bring together two distinct groups of people: people who struggle against poverty daily; and an equal number of senior civic, political and business leaders. Although both groups are of critical importance, Poverty Truth Commissions always begin by bringing people with direct experience of poverty together. Only once they are a strong enough community, do others join in.

Commissions focus on building relationships; encouraging change within the organisations, institutions and communities that the commissioners come from; developing shared work between the two different groups of commissioners; and making policy proposals around key areas of anti-poverty work identified through the experience and knowledge of the commissioners. Click [here](#) for a film outlining the process of a Poverty Truth Commission.

The first PTC was established in Scotland in 2009 and has completed four iterations. Since 2013, Poverty Truth Commissions have emerged south of the border, first in Leeds and now in over 15 other places across England and Wales. The Poverty Truth Network was established in 2019 as a charity to support and network this ongoing work. Click [here](#) for a film outlining the role of the Poverty Truth Network.

## Core Principles

Crucial to understanding PTCs is recognising the principles that underpin them.

### Lived Experience

- People with a direct experience of poverty have the missing expertise. Let their concerns set the agenda.

### Humanising Everyone

- Leave your title at the door. Meet as people not as professionals or service users but as human beings.
- Encourage and support one another throughout the process. Create spaces for people individually and collectively to reflect on their experiences.

### Paying Attention

- Learn to listen with your heart as well as your head then set your hands to action.
- A safe space for honest debate that is characterised by encountering one another, deep listening and mutual reflection.

### **Powerful Relationships**

- Take time with one another, building relationships, friendships and trust not just examining problems.
- Co-produce and co-own the commission. Everyone's experience is relevant and powerful.

### **Seeing More Clearly**

- Don't get involved unless you are willing to be changed. Some of the things you will hear will be challenging and difficult. Your perceptions of people in power and people in poverty will not be the same again.
- We see more clearly by examining the local context and realising there are no quick fix solutions. The causes of poverty are systemic, and it is not enough to be simply concerned with its symptoms. At the same time practical progress matters.

## The Poverty Truth Network

A key task of The Poverty Truth Network is to help local people and organisations to establish PTCs in their region. For a PTC to be established, there needs to be strong local energy and commitment, with a willingness to take the time to develop a collaborative way of working in which those with direct experience of the struggle against poverty are recognised as critical to change. Where such a commitment is present, the Poverty Truth Network come alongside those who are seeking to establish a PTC in an accompanying relationship.

## The Next Step

In our experience, understanding how to facilitate a PTC is a deliberate process that is best caught through conversation than taught through a pdf document. We suggest that the next step is for a member of the Network to visit the local area to help you assess whether there is the necessary appetite and welcome to this approach. The visit could include a mixture of one-to-one and small group conversations alongside larger presentations. It will be an opportunity for you to introduce the idea of a Poverty Truth Commission to as wide a group of people as possible and to assess whether they would welcome this approach at this time.

These visits seem to work best when there are a wide range of people engaged through them. They should include people with a direct experience of the struggle against poverty, leaders from key organisations and institutions in the city, and people who may be interested in helping to develop a commission. Following this visit, the next step on the process is to develop a start-up group for the PTC. This visit is a key opportunity to introduce the idea for those who you think may want to belong to such a group.

If you would like to move to this next step then please let us know as soon as possible so that we can arrange the dates in our diaries. If there is anything else we can help you with then please don't hesitate to contact us.