



**Co-operative Councils**  
Innovation Network

## POVERTY

Salford City Council

# Salford Poverty Truth Commission: How a new approach to tackling poverty is succeeding in Salford

What if people living in poverty could take the lead in challenging Salford's leaders to work with them on tackling poverty?

Would it make a difference to the decisions that are being made? Would new solutions be discovered?

These were just a few of the questions that were being asked when Salford Poverty Truth Commission (PTC) was launched in July 2016. The PTC consisted of 15 people with personal experience of poverty and 15 people in business or public life, whose positions might enable them to help make changes happen. In October 2017, 15 months on, the answers were shared at a moving and inspiring public event: *Salford Poverty Truth Commission – Our Story So Far*.

People from across Salford and around the country gathered at The Sanctuary in Salford Quays to hear moving, first-hand stories (using poetry and drama) of how the commission has influenced and inspired change in Salford.

The PTC has achieved much, listening to the voice and strong evidence of those with first-hand experience, and working closely with the council to influence key parts of the Tackling Poverty Strategy and altering the way that it speaks with, writes to and meets with residents.

It has inspired the council to:

- review its debt recovery/ income collection systems, ensuring they are as sensitive as possible and do not create further hardship, distress or difficulty for vulnerable people;
- stop using enforcement agents when recovering debts from the most vulnerable residents who receive a council tax reduction (adopting the LGA and Citizens Advice's *Collection of Council Tax Good Practice Protocol*);



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- launch new face-to-face coffee drop-in sessions for people seeking help/ advice on debt: re-writing its standard letters to prevent “brown envelope syndrome” and giving full council tax exemptions for Salford care leavers; and
- waived the £11 charges for copies of birth certificates for homeless people, enabling them to more easily obtain the official identification they need to access benefits.

Some of these measures are now being discussed across Greater Manchester and in London.

On reflection in reaching this stage of Salford’s journey in tackling poverty, there was recognition and continued support amongst participants that “politics is either done to us, or we shape it ... PTCs are a powerful way for people to choose that second option”.

[>> For more photos, see our Facebook page](#)

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