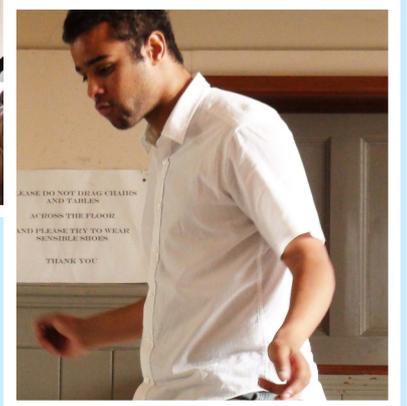


Cornwall Independent Poverty Forum

What we do



Giving a voice to, and empowering the socially excluded

REFLECTION - RT. REVD TIM THORNTON, BISHOP OF TRURO

The Hearing that took place in Truro Methodist Church was a very important, and in many ways, prophetic event. We have faced various cuts in public spending, which has had an impact on a variety of bodies and people across the county.

At the Hearing it was good to listen to many different stories, both from individuals whose lives have been, and are, affected by issues relating to poverty and from many groups and projects working with and for those who are most affected. It was salutary to hear the stories of those whose lives very quickly changed from being apparently in balance to being in real (and various) difficulties. We were told by several speakers about the impending difficulties and the changes in the law that would have a direct impact on the most marginalised members of our community.

I do want to pay tribute to the Cornwall Independent Poverty Forum for all it does to bring together those who work in this vital area and the crucial work of telling the difficult, but vital, messages to the wider world. I also want to thank all those who contributed in any way to making the day a success and to thank all those who attended on the day. The stories and reports in this document are a snapshot of the good work that is necessary across Cornwall.

It is sad in many ways that such a hearing is needed and that the many groups that exist, do have to exist. I fear that given where we are, the work will not only continue but increase over the next year or two. My own religious faith impels me to look to my neighbour and to try and care for them in whatever need they are. I know that people of all faiths and none understand the need to care for others. As you read this, I hope that you are helped to know something of the size of the problems here and also encouraged by what is happening and inspired, if you are not already, to become involved for the sake of others.

Tim Thornton



CHALLENGE

The Cornwall Independent Poverty Forum's Challenges

- To continue to help and support those suffering who are most disadvantaged.
- To continue to raise awareness of poverty issues, particularly issues of housing and homelessness, health and benefits, with the wider community, and with the voluntary and community sector organisations and statutory organisations, which provide services to those in most need.
- To continue to lobby statutory organisations and politicians, to make positive changes to policies and strategies, that impact on those suffering poverty.

Your Challenges

- To support those most disadvantaged, by taking positive action either as an individual or as an organisation.
- To support (including financial) the Voluntary and Community Sector organisations, including the Cornwall Independent Poverty Forum, which provide help and support to those most in need.
- To improve any services that you deliver, to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged.
- To develop new and innovative projects that help address the issues of social exclusion.
- To improve policies and strategies to reflect a better understanding of the issues, that those in most need are facing.

INDIVIDUAL STORIES

Graham's story

My name is Graham Brown and I was born in Essex in 1970. I was brought up in care from the age of 3 years old and I came out of care at the age of 16 years old. I could not cope on my own and there wasn't any support so the only life I knew was one of crime. So from the age of 16 up until 7 years ago (I'm now 40 years old). I have been in and out of prison. I ended up with a life sentence and while I was starting this sentence my first daughter was born. I held her for the first time and I said "no more crime".. (and that I meant). I got out of prison 7 years ago and now I am married and have 3 children. I struggled to get work as no one wanted a lifer working for them so instead of giving up I followed my heart and went looking to work with Ex-offenders. I was told this would never happen due to my past. I am doing all the work I have always wanted to do and more. I just want to grow and grow (and I will).....

I could not cope on my own and there wasn't any support so the only life I knew was one of crime.

Sarah's Story

I grew up in Bedfordshire in a middle class family and had a lot of things, but I didn't really have what I needed from my parents in terms of emotional support. I was sent to a private school in the town when I was 8 and didn't get home from school until all my friends had gone in for their tea. They called me a snob and I was bullied at school by the other girls. My father was abusive at home and my mother didn't stop him. So I felt very lonely. At the age of 12 I found that alcohol made life seem much better and helped me to feel like I fitted in. I soon got into drugs and was lucky not to get arrested or to die because some of the people who were around me were very dangerous and I was only 16. My parents were neglecting me because they were going through a separation.

I soon got into drugs and was lucky not to get arrested or to die because some of the people who were around me were very dangerous and I was only 16.

Life was very difficult for a long time. I went through a lot of depression and even considered killing myself. Luckily I found recovery in self-help groups in my late twenties and I have been clean and sober now for 8 and a half years. It has been a very tough journey as, when I was 5 years sober I was in an abusive relationship with a man who would threaten to kill me daily. He did hurt me physically a few times but the worst was the psychological torture he put me through, lying to me and saying I was imagining things and making me think I was going crazy. My self esteem was so low I didn't think I deserved anything better. Sometimes he would be lovely to me and this went in cycles, but it would always come back to him being abusive to me again.

Life was very difficult for a long time. I went through a lot of depression and even considered killing myself

I finally moved away from my home to a Women's Refuge here in Cornwall, in fear for my life. I didn't feel I could trust my parents to help me and I was scared he would hurt or bully my friends if I went to them. My life was in ruins but I knew a drink would not make it any better. At the refuge I was given a brilliant book called "Power and Control" by Sandra Horley. It saved my life because it showed me that I was not responsible for his anger and that I had to come out of denial about my part in allowing him to hurt me over and over. It gave me the strength not to go back to him again.

(.....continued)

When I was drinking I always talked about writing a book last week I sent my completed novel off to a publisher

It took me a long time to build my life back up but I started volunteering for a community project and after a few months I was made Deputy Manager. I feel I was helped by people when I was in trouble and I wanted to give back to society. The project has become a great success, helping vulnerable people. I am also Secretary a voluntary group which does a lot to raise awareness of the poverty issues in Cornwall. When I was drinking I always talked about writing a book and never did anything about it. Last week I sent my completed novel off to a publisher. I have amazing friends in my life and am happy and contented now with a loving man in my life who thinks the world of me. I hope others can be helped in the same way I have.

Peter's Story

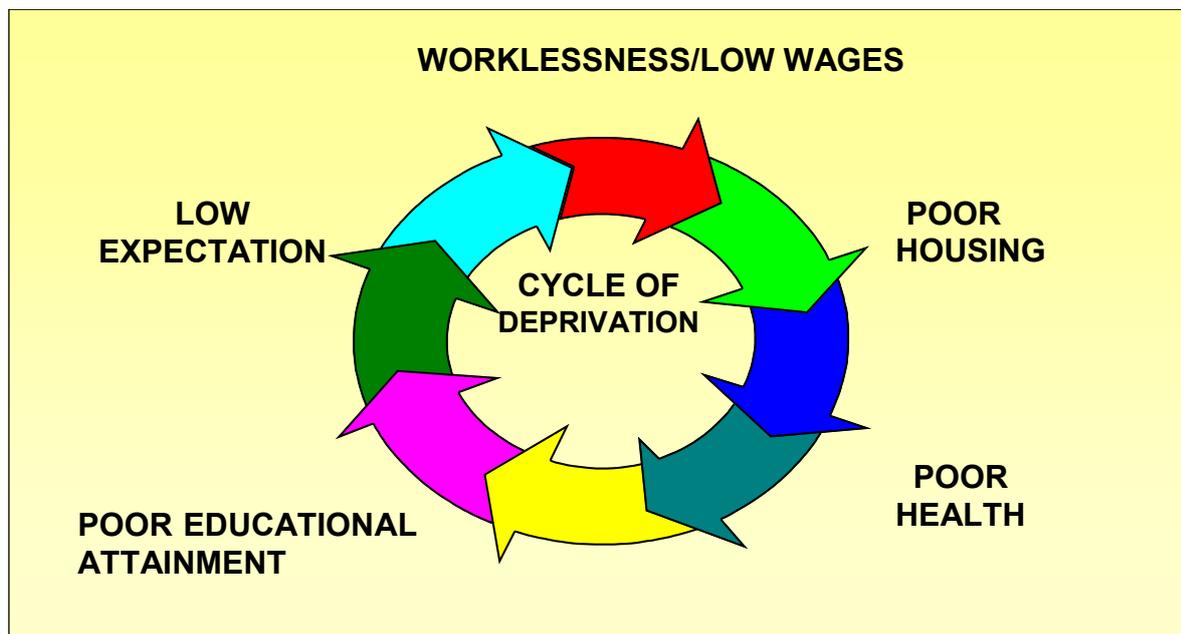
My name is Peter. I was always told I was "no good, would be useless and never meant nothing" right from an early age right up to leaving school. I went to one of the biggest schools in Northern England, about 3000 of us, about 60 of us in a Class, just one Teacher. I didn't really get any help and was always pushed to the back of the class. I always put my hand up but was told "put your hand down Gary, go and stand outside the classroom with all the other naughty people."

Really I had no confidence and I was just isolated and I didn't know how to live life other than on shop doorways.

I ended up living on the streets as I was told I was "no good". I was on the streets living in shop doorways and eating out of bins and people paid me no attention. For me it ain't about attention - bad attention is better than no attention. I started hanging round with people doing drugs and drink. I was using drugs 26 years and was in and out of jail from a young age. I've done 26 jail sentences for my 26 years of using drugs, that tells me what a useless addict I was, but I had nothing else to do.

I ended up in Cornwall and started living on the streets in Cornwall. Really I had no confidence and I was just isolated I didn't know how to live life other than in shop doorways. Pinching door mats from shop doorways to keep warm, holes in shoes, same socks on for 6 months, same pants for 6 months, never had a change, that's what life was like for me. When I come to Cornwall after a few months down here I did turn to someone that did help me, my life today had certainly changed like today people helped me and gave me a chance. I work with Homeless people, the Church in Penzance, and the YMCA. Dave Smith as well gave me a chance, he could see through me and knew I was employable and knew I was worth it. I wasn't worthless. Just to be given that chance, I never had that chance in life so I am very grateful to that from Dave, thanks for that Cheers.

CYCLE OF DEPRIVATION



GOOD NEWS STORIES

Daniel's Story

I was introduced to the Forum by the estimable Shelia Johns. I am 37 years old, have a good background, and have lived in Cornwall since 1980. Unfortunately I have a long term mental health condition which I have suffered for the past 20 years. I was diagnosed in 1990 and I believe my illness was "ahead of the times" as mental ill-health is now widely acknowledged. Mental health affects income and employment prospects as well as: coping ability; level of independence; freedom and autonomy. There is a lot of bureaucracy and red tape associated with mental health illness. The causes and symptoms of my illness are often enigmatic and tough to describe. The effects can be broad like a "blindfold" around all senses as well as the eyes. There can be prejudice too similar to that faced by other people with differences and problems. I secured employment as a Tesco checkout assistant (Show Trust) since the last Poverty Hearing (which was held in Bodmin). Unfortunately there have been further nightmares and a complexity of benefits and sometimes intrusive bureaucracy. However I am now happy in my work.

Tracy's Story

I went to Carrick Council because I was living just outside Truro. My husband's health was deteriorating and - guess what - Carrick Council weren't interested in rehousing us (as they aren't interested in rehousing a lot of people). My relationship with my husband deteriorated, he suffered with severe depression and he went back to Sussex to family. My son and I stayed in a tent and my son's health was deteriorating. We stayed in the tent for 2 months; it was very cold and awful conditions. I went to Truro Job Centre and signed on and fortunately found a job really quickly. The Job Centre put me in touch with Sheila Johns who was a saviour. I can't say enough about this wonderful person and Cornwall Poverty Forum. I found somewhere to live, private accommodation and Poverty Forum gave us the money to set up home. Also Home Comforts gave us some furniture, what a good service and we were able to get on with our lives, my son and I. Unfortunately we were evicted within 7 months. We were rehoused in temporary accommodation, 2 rooms with a 16 year old is not much fun, it's not much fun for anybody, but a 16 year old boy with his mum wants privacy. So you can imagine that was really very difficult. The Cornwall Poverty Forum was a great support to me and I am sure they had some influence in getting us rehoused quickly. I have lived in our Council Flat for 2½ years and I will always be thankful to The Poverty Forum, in particular Sheila who sadly is no longer with us, for their kindness and support. Thank you and long may this fantastic organisation run.

I found somewhere to live, private accommodation and Poverty Forum gave us the money to set up home.

Swamp Circus

Swamp Circus highlight the issues of poverty, disadvantage and rural isolation, in Cornwall. Swamp Circus work with young people on the verge of exclusion, or who do not normally have access to circus activities. A varied programme based around circus skills allows the young people to; build confidence, build physical and mental self esteem, mental and physical dexterity, increase flexibility and strength and understand team work. For most of the young people, this was the first time they had been involved in a public performance. For more information view www.swampcircus.com



SUPPORTING PROJECTS

DISC - Circle of Friends Project

DISC stands for Drop In and Share Centre and runs from Camborne Parish Church Hall. DISC offers a safe warm welcome for any vulnerable adult and a non-judgmental listening ear. Showers, laundry, clothes and a subsidized hot meal are provided. Emotional support, help with benefits and housing, advocacy, an outreach service and court support are also offered. The Samaritans attend the centre regularly. The new sub-project Circle of Friends aims to reduce the current re-offending rate of 70%. It will involve one to one support by a Community Support Worker, meetings of a self-help group and continual individual reviews based upon the seven Strategic Pathways as recognised by the Probation Service (including Accommodation, Training and Education, Personal Development etc.)



The project aims to put a stop to the revolving door that many prolific offenders find themselves in by offering the relevant practical and emotional support under the umbrella of DISC. The project is looking for funding and hopes to receive match funding from the Probation Service.

No reserve of cash or food

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Contact: Mike Firbank mjfirbank@hotmail.com

Christians Against Poverty



Christians Against Poverty (CAP) is a free Debt Counselling Service available to anyone regardless of faith/background. We deal with over £55 million worth of debt. CAP is an international service with over 130 centres throughout the UK, we are also in Australia and New Zealand. We provide clients with a budget and negotiate with their creditors, which helps to relieve the stress and anxiety of being in debt. Here in Cornwall we have a varied client base, from those living in sheltered accommodation to teachers staff and Solicitors, debt can affect anyone.

31% of people hide their debt from their partners

One of our clients who worked in the tourist industry was made redundant and said that whilst there were a number of tourists in Cornwall this year, they were simply not spending as much and this has resulted in redundancies. The knock on effect is that her budget is tight and she can no longer afford to run a car which is very isolating. Fortunately Christians Against Poverty are able to negotiate with her creditors and support her through a difficult time.

Contact: Natalie Gavan nataliegavan@capuk.org

Intercom Trust



The Intercom trust is a charity working across the Southwest supporting the Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) communities that live in and visit the area. The Helpline and Advocacy Service offers confidential and non-judgmental support on issues as varied as homophobic bullying, low self esteem, domestic abuse, gender and sexual orientation issues. We support clients with information and encouragement to empower people to speak up or to take on advocacy work where they feel that they need formal support. We are a listening ear and can help to signpost LGBT people for advice around housing and debt issues. A number of clients have housing problems, especially young people that have been made homeless once their parents or guardians discover their sexual orientation. Some of our clients have mental health issues, some stemming from poor life experiences and subsequent use of drugs and alcohol to try to cope with their feelings.

A lesbian client recently came to the service about being harassed in the street and in her home, local youths are calling her names and being abusive, laughing about their neighbour 'the freak' but she was trying to ignore them. She feels too anxious to go out alone, and needed someone to talk to. Recently the youths started throwing stones and rubbish at her home and have urinated on her front door. She is terrified and needs support to access the police and housing providers before the situation gets worse.

Contact: Steve Cannon steve@intercomtrust.org.uk

Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution (RABI)



Eight out of ten dairy farmers earn less than the National minimum wage of £26,600

The Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution (RABI) supports people in the farming community who are experiencing financial difficulties, funded solely by public donations. We help people in need of any age who work or have worked in England or Wales as farmers, farm workers or agricultural workers, or are the dependant of someone who has. To qualify, retired applicants must normally be aged at least 65 years and have worked on the land for ten or more years. Exceptions may be made where someone has given up work early due to ill health/disability. If working, applicants must be in difficulty because of exceptional temporary circumstances, eg illness, bereavement, or animal disease. In Cornwall we currently support 57 people aged 24 to 98 on a long-term basis, and in the first nine months of 2010 received 18 new requests for help - twice as many as in all 2009 and the third highest in the country after Yorkshire and Devon. **Case studies:**

Tim, a tenant farmer in his 30s, was diagnosed with cancer. While undergoing chemotherapy, he couldn't supplement the family income with outside work. Bills mounted up and the hospital was 90 miles away. We paid for travel costs, domestic expenses, and temporary staff to run the farm while he recovered. According to Tim, had it not been for RABI, he'd have lost the farm.

Ivy is 86 and the widow of a farm worker, with only a state pension. With severe mobility problems, she found getting in and out of her chair very difficult. We gave her a small quarterly grant to help with bills, an electric riser/recliner chair, and a lifeline alarm. Now she says she can live safely in her own home.

Contact: Philippa Spackman, Devon and Cornwall officer, Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution
p.spackman@rabi.org.uk Tel 01872 500902

Truro Foodbank



The Truro Foodbank has been operational for just over twelve months. It is affiliated to the Trussell Trust who have now seeded seventy Foodbanks throughout the UK. We are an independent registered charity run by a committee drawn from the churches in Truro. The purpose is to supply non-perishable food to local people in emergency need. We do this by Collecting food from churches, school harvests and occasional shopping days at local supermarkets. We have a list of food we need and we ask shoppers if they would like to buy one extra item of food with their shopping and donate it to the Foodbank.

I had £2.53 spare and some chicken stock so I bought a pumpkin and lived off pumpkin soup 3 meals a day for 3 days

Front line professional staff such as social workers; Citizens advice staff; Ministers and housing association managers, - nearly 40 organisations - hold our vouchers and give them to people they consider to be in need of emergency food supplies. We also keep Emergency Food Boxes for crises that occur outside our opening hours. Clients bring the voucher to one of our open sessions where we welcome them with coffee and biscuits and a friendly chat while their food is being bagged. We supply them with enough food for three meals a day for three days, together with a professionally prepared menu showing how the food can be used.

Our volunteers - we have forty - meet people from every walk of life - teenagers who have had to leave home or care, families in debt crisis, folk who have suddenly lost their job through their employer going into receivership, families living below the poverty line and faced with an unexpected large bill or single elderly folk returning to an empty house after a spell in hospital. In our first year we have supplied food to 500 people.

A typical story A single mum, recently made redundant was proud to see her son leave home for college but this meant a change to her benefit. Her existing benefit was cancelled but it can take weeks for the new benefit to come through. She had been living on white toast for nearly three weeks, but this and worries about the lack of money had made her quite ill. She was referred to us and shed a few tears with one of our volunteers and when she saw the generous supply of food, shed a few more and left determined to come and help when she was feeling better.

Contact: Malcolm Henderson mandhenderson@googlemail.com

CORNWALL INDEPENDENT POVERTY FORUM

Mission Statement



The Cornwall Independent Poverty Forum (CIPF) was established in 1996 to tackle social exclusion.

Our main aim is to enable individuals to regain control of their lives and take their rightful place in society by utilising their talents for the benefit of their communities.

We are people centred and by listening, we learn about the problems that poverty, ill-health and bureaucracy bring and which condemn too many people to desperation, loneliness and exclusion.

The Forum is committed to highlighting failures within the system and to bringing about reform.

The Forum befriends by offering a helping hand and a listening ear and our main tools are companionship, constructive help and long-term support through the maze of officialdom.

The CIPF motto is a 'Hand-up not a Hand-out'. All Welcome. For further information and details of application contact Andrew Yates 01872 274351 andrew.yates@truro.anglican.org

CIPF Meetings 2012 - All Welcome

Monday, 11th June, 2012 at 7.00 pm

Emmanuel Baptist Church, Lounge area, Western Terrace, Falmouth.
TR11 4QJ

Monday, 2nd July, 2012 at 7.00 pm

At Diocesan House, Kenwyn, Truro. TR1 1JQ

Monday, 6th August, 2012 at 2.00 pm

In the Dingley Hall, Launceston Methodist Church, Castle Street, Launceston.
PL15 8BA

Monday, 3rd September, 2012 at 2.00 pm

At Diocesan House, Kenwyn, Truro. TR1 1JQ

Monday, 1st October, 2012 at 7.00 pm

At St Augustine of Hippo RC Church, Woodland Road, St Austell PL25 4RA

Monday, 5th November, 2012 at 7.00 pm

At Diocesan House, Kenwyn, Truro. TR1 1JQ

Monday, 3rd December, 2012 at 7.00 pm

In the Narthex, St Michael's Church, Newquay. TR7 1RA

**If you require further information regarding the
Cornwall Independent Poverty Forum please contact:**

Andrew Yates, Social Responsibility Officer, Diocese of Truro
Tel. (01872) 274351 andrew.yates@truro.anglican.org or

Paul Green, Project Manager, Cornwall Homeless Support Project
Tel: (01872) 274351 paul.green@truro.anglican.org

***This report is dedicated to the memory of Sheila Johns,
Founder of the Cornwall Independent Poverty Forum***