



Scottish Urban
Regeneration Forum

SURF : sharing experience : shaping practice

SURF Open Forum – Outcomes Paper on:

Community Regeneration – What Do We Know About Poverty?

Held: 12th March 2009, CoSLA Conference Centre, Edinburgh

Plenary Speakers: Tom Spencer & Tom Rutherford, Social Justice Analysis, Scottish Government

Chair: Edward Harkins, Networking Initiatives Manager, SURF

Participants: Sixty participants from community and voluntary sector organisations and intermediaries, the private sector, urban regeneration companies, local authorities, COSLA, housing associations and SFHA, health sector, higher & further education institutions and other partnership bodies or funding agencies, such as Scottish Government’s Scottish Centre for Regeneration (SCR).

Follow-up: The SURF networking programme will continue over the coming year to focus on tackling poverty and inequality through regeneration as one of its core themes. Readers are invited to contact SURF with any comments on this paper, or on the event itself or on future content for this theme within the programme. The bibliography source for this event is at the SURF website [knowledge centre](#).

Learning, ideas and opportunities arising from the Open Forum: This section briefly summarises some of the core learning outcomes that arose during this event:

Research and evidence gathering:

- Many participants reported that being involved in qualitative evidence gathering on poverty issues is an empowering experience for individuals. Some participants, however, report difficulty in identifying and accessing, in appropriate ways, the most needed people. The Poverty Alliance in Scotland is just embarking on its ‘Evidence, Participation & Change’ programme that will use participatory methods so that members of the client group will collect the qualitative evidence.

- Participants agreed that the development of a set of research tools for quantitative research approaches would be of significant help. For practically all participants there was a pragmatic acceptance that ‘you had to have the data’ to even begin to seek out funding for work to tackle poverty.

Data – availability, type uses and user-skills:

- There was a general concern and frustration expressed about the lack of meaningful, standardised and accessible data on poverty within Scotland and especially at, and below, the local authority level.
- Participants, however, also welcomed the availability and use of different types of data (e.g. quantitative, qualitative, perceptions). The suggestion was that significant additional returns could be achieved through more available, and access to, training learning, and facilitation on the sourcing and use of data – this has to be extended to community activists and frontline workers.
- Many participants expressed a desire not only for more data on poverty, mainly at very local levels, but also for a willingness by all stakeholders to co-operate constructively with such data on the basis of joint learning and development.

Broader issues of delivery and policy:

- The lack of capacity and sustainability of Third Sector organisations operating in the field of tackling poverty is often perceived as a problem. This is, instead, for many participants a significant opportunity and a win-win scenario for all stakeholders. The assertion is that if some key issues around equitable and sustainable funding can be resolved, these Third Sector organisations can bring additional, effective and immediate practical improvements to the delivery and development of programmes on tackling poverty.
- The Dept of Work & Pension’s current reforms of ‘Welfare to Work’ support programmes are seen by some participants as an opportunity to ensure a move away from any ‘tick box’ approach to providing training, skills and support for people returning to work. Although there are existing examples of good initiatives, on the whole, support is seen by many participants as too short-term and too target driven.
- For some participants the ongoing National Conversation consultation activity is an opportunity for the Scottish Government to engage with socially excluded individuals and households on the theme of poverty – a move beyond the ‘usual suspects’. In this context, the presence of representatives from the Scottish Government’s Social Justice Analysis Team at the Open Forum was welcomed.
- The UK policy and regulatory responses to the recession, initiated by the ‘credit crunch’, is for many participants a timely opportunity to address issues of

irresponsible credit lenders, and in particular, exorbitant ‘in debt for life’, low income, traps that poor people are enmeshed in.

- The belief that ‘work is the best route out of poverty’, was contested by many participants who referred, for example, to the recent JRF [report](#) that demonstrated that most children living in poverty were part of a household where one or both parents were in paid employment. Others cited [evidence](#) that the most vulnerable people are anyway those least able to secure well and fairly paid work.

Useful examples and sources:

- Participants cited some good examples on the collection and use of data on poverty in Scotland – including:
 - [‘Know Fife’](#) under the Fife Partnership
 - South Lanarkshire’s [shared data set](#)
 - Edinburgh Partnership’s [index of poverty](#):
- Participants highlighted established case studies of [micro credit schemes and banks](#) in the poorest of communities around the globe – and proposed that this is, surely, something that should be piloted in Scotland.
- The work of the [UK Media Trust](#) in the field of the media and reporting poverty was favourably commented on.

Purpose of this paper: This paper is intended to encapsulate the general flow of this inter-active forum comprising of the plenary session and workshops. It is not possible to reiterate every nuance and detail. The views stated reflect, wherever possible, the broadest consensus views of participants.

Background to the Forum: SURF delivers a national programme of Open Forums and networking activities with the aim of offering its networking service to all regeneration practitioners and interested parties across Scotland. This networking activity is funded by SCR, Scottish Government. SURF will continue to act as the independent facilitator for the network, bringing together key players, and produce constructive Outcome Papers to help inform policy decision-making and practice. For any clarification or additional information contact:

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