

Developing the Anti-Poverty Network in Scotland

EAPN MASS Training
28-29 November 2014

Poverty Alliance: Who we are

- Poverty Alliance is the anti-poverty network in Scotland, set up in 1992, informally since mid 1980s
- Around 200 members, community & voluntary orgs, trade unions, individuals (inc. people with experience of poverty)
- Core funded by Scottish Government since 1999. Budget around €700K in 2013-14. Majority from project funding.
- Currently 12 staff, including 2 part-time
- Projects include work on food poverty, living wage, housing & young people, welfare reform

Poverty Alliance: Strategy

- Our **vision** is of a sustainable Scotland based on social and economic justice, with dignity for all, where poverty and inequalities are not tolerated and are challenged.
- Our **aim** is to combat poverty by working with others to empower individuals and communities to affect change in the distribution of power and resources
- Strategic plan identifies 4 key priorities:
 - To work with people with experience of poverty to empower them to address poverty
 - Build a strong anti-poverty network
 - To support the development of policies that tackle poverty and support social justice
 - Raise awareness about poverty

Poverty Alliance: What we do

➤ Key current activities include:

- Tracking the impact of welfare change in Glasgow
- Carrying out participatory research with young people on housing issues
- A range of activities around the living wage, including coordinating LW Campaign & Accreditation Initiative
- Research into link food banks into wider social provision
- Campaigning on welfare reform
- Media activity, including Stick Your Labels Campaign,
- Networking events across Scotland
- Active in European Anti-Poverty Network

Membership campaign: The Scottish Campaign on Welfare Reform

- SCoWR was formed in 2006 in response to welfare reform proposals from the Labour Government
- SCoWR brought together PA members and non members with shared interests
- SCoWR is a campaigning machine – there was a clear agenda from the outset & our role was to enable each organisation to contribute
- It is not always easy. All organisations have their own priorities & compromises have to be made

SCoWR Key Demands

- ✓ Adequate incomes and all have sufficient income to lead a dignified life
- ✓ Make respect for human rights and dignity the cornerstone of a new approach to welfare
- ✓ Radically simplify the welfare system
- ✓ Invest in the support needed to enable everyone to participate fully in society

SCoWR: Key Successes

Limited at UK level but better in Scotland where we have seen:

- Creation of the Welfare Reform Committee
- Increased funding for Council Tax Benefit
- Creation of the Scottish Welfare Fund
- Involvement in key Scottish Government Welfare Forums
- Promoting a different type of debate about welfare in Scotland

Key Lessons for the Network

- Coalition building is essential – this is difficult in times of austerity but the benefits are clear
- Information sharing is key – there is strength in numbers
- Each organisation will be able to contribute in a different way
- SCoWR has allowed the sector to come together to talk about welfare reform in a new way

Membership engagement and capacity building

- PA undertake a range of activities to support development of members
- We run a series of events throughout the year including two day assembly and understanding poverty seminars
- We also hold one off events which bring people with direct experience of poverty into contact with policy makers

Membership Support to Members

- PA publish a variety of publications for members including the Scottish Anti Poverty Review and policy briefings
- Members are sent a monthly e-newsletter with details of events, recent publications and updates on our work
- PA has a strong social media presence with over 6000 followers on twitter and a growing number of 'likes' on facebook

Key Lessons for the Network

- It is important that members are involved in development
- People with direct experience of poverty should be included
- Events need to be relevant, there doesn't always need to be actions
- Important to ensure events link to the other parts of the 4 pillars
- Financial resources are critical...

Contact

Carla McCormack,

Policy and Parliamentary Officer

carla.mccormack@povertyalliance.org

www.povertyalliance.org