

## **CPP CONFERENCE REPORT**

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Conference was to bring key partners and services together to discuss how we collectively respond to the challenges emerging from COVID and lockdown. The information collected from the Conference will be used to develop a new Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP), which is the Community Planning Partnership's shared strategy, setting out how we will collectively tackle inequality and improve outcomes for people across Perth and Kinross. The Conference focused on five strategic priorities:

1. Poverty, including child poverty, food poverty and fuel poverty;
2. Mental and physical wellbeing;
3. Skills, learning and development;
4. Employability; and
5. Digital participation.

### **OUTCOMES**

The intended outcomes from the Conference were:

- To reconfirm our key priorities for the future, in light of what we have learned about the impact of COVID on our communities
- To identify where we can build on successful community-led initiatives to improve outcomes
- To agree the CPP actions required to deliver our priorities in 2021/22 and beyond

### **PROGRAMME**

The Conference took place over two half days. Across the two days delegates focused on: the root causes of the issues underlying the five priorities; the need to move towards preventative interventions; and learning from positive stories about our communities. The main part of the Conference was a series of workshop sessions designed to agree actions that can only be delivered through the CPP. Each workshop followed the same format, concentrating on a key priority and starting with a discussion on work already underway, before moving on to consider new ideas and actions that will tackle the underlying causes of inequality.

### **NEXT STEPS**

The information gathered across the two days will be collated and used to develop a new Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) for Perth and Kinross. This will be shared in draft form for discussion at the Community Planning Partnership Board on 21 May and a finalised version will be approved over the summer.

### **CONTENT**

This report summarises the Conference over the two half days, highlighting the key points from each session.

## **DAY 1 – Wednesday 28 April**

### **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Cllr Murray Lyle, Co-Chair of the CPP Board welcomed everyone to the Conference and reflected on the impact of COVID and lockdown. Cllr Lyle set out why collaborative working to provide better services and outcomes for our communities is arguably even more important than it ever has been. The last 12 months has demonstrated that in times of real adversity, services and communities have really stepped up, finding innovative ways to deliver services to those in need. Cllr Lyle outlined the programme for the Conference and emphasised the need to focus on how the Community Planning Partnership can work together to make a positive difference. Cllr Lyle concluded by introducing Sharon Thomas, Operations Manager at The Lighthouse for Perth as the keynote speaker.

### **SHARON THOMAS – KEYNOTE SPEAKER**

Sharon spoke passionately about the work of The Lighthouse for Perth, which was established in March 2020, to provide out of hours crisis support to those struggling with their mental health. Over the past twelve months, the work of The Lighthouse and other similar services has become even more crucial in supporting vulnerable people across Perth and Kinross as loneliness, isolation and poor mental health has become more prevalent.

Sharon explained that COVID and lockdown has brought additional pressures and anxieties to those who are already struggling, with the potential for increasing issues around: isolation and anxiety; exposure to abuse or neglect; substance misuse; adverse childhood experiences (ACEs); unemployment and poverty; and relationship issues or breakdown. When considering the response to COVID, Sharon argued that a planned and pro-active approach to awareness raising and education has helped people's understanding and has helped to tackle the stigma associated with poor mental wellbeing. This has also helped services to respond well to specific incidents and take the pressure off emergency services. The Neuk, which offers a 24/7 support centre and overnight accommodation in Perth, was highlighted as a positive development and the broader group of support services are keen to add a Mental Health Emergency Vehicle with a paramedic and mental health nurse available to provide help where needed.

Sharon indicated that the most successful interventions take place as early as possible and are collaborative in nature. This provides the best chance of preventing a crisis situation from developing. Delegates questioned Sharon on the specifics of The Lighthouse and its work and numerous offers of mutual support were given. There was broad agreement that the need to intervene early and together is a key lesson for services to take on board and ultimately underpins successful community planning. There was further agreement that COVID has shown that interventions which are tailored to the needs of the individual(s) and are delivered locally are likely to be more successful.

### **NICOLA RUSSELL – EMERGING PRIORITIES FOR THE NEW LOIP**

Nicola outlined the background to the Conference and the work that the Community Planning Partnership had undertaken from July to December 2020 to identify and agree the five strategic priorities, which form the basis of the new LOIP. Nicola also outlined the enabling actions that will be taken forward by the CPP to support partners in making a positive impact on the priorities:

1. Community participation and co-production;
2. Partnership working at locality level;
3. Data sharing; and
4. Risk management.

## **WORKSHOP SESSIONS**

There were two workshop sessions on Day 1, one focusing on Child Poverty and the other on Food and Fuel Poverty. Key points from these workshops included:

### **Child Poverty**

- Child Poverty is at the heart of all of the inequality issues, affecting, and affected by all of the other priorities. This highlights the interlinked nature of the inequalities we are seeking to tackle.
- We must help those families in most need to make that initial contact, especially in a digital world. Language and communications are hugely important.
- We need to break the cycle of families who have been struggling with poverty for generations. Raising aspiration among children living in poverty is essential.
- Perth and Kinross has a comparatively high level of low paid and insecure / seasonal work, with significant employment around agriculture, hospitality and tourism. We need to focus on the reasons why people have to rely on unsecure or low-paid employment.
- We need to provide a foundation of financial knowledge, for example how credit rates work, bank accounts, budgeting and lending. This should be part of education from an early age.
- We can get better at sharing knowledge and signposting to pathways across services, so all staff can provide some basic and sensitive support to those who are struggling.

### **Food & Fuel Poverty**

- We need to support food larders as we move out of lockdown, especially in the most rural areas where there are few alternatives and volunteers tend to be elderly. Community groups are seen as key partners in supporting food larders. This relationship underlines the ethos of the Perth and Kinross Offer.
- We should make better use of front line partners who are regularly out in communities and have the means to reach residents regularly. We should utilise their local knowledge to identify need.
- We do not have sufficient capacity to support income maximisation for all our families. Family wellbeing should be our focus and we should not have to wait for a crisis before intervening.
- There are significant and growing issues around in-work poverty. It can be very difficult to identify and offer support to those who are working but are still living below the poverty line.
- Fuel poverty can be hidden, especially in households which are asset rich, but cash poor.
- Older housing stock across communities in Perth and Kinross can be a real drain on family resources and the question of heating the home or putting food on the table is a reality for many.
- There are opportunities for families to get support to reduce their fuel use, but awareness levels tend to be low. This is closely linked to the climate change debate and reducing emissions and energy use can be hugely beneficial for everyone.

## **DAY 2 – Thursday 29 April**

### **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Pau Graham Co-Chair of the CPP Board welcomed everyone to the second day of the Conference. Paul reflected on some of the main summary points from Day 1 and outlined the structure for Day 2, with one additional workshop session. Paul reiterated the need to focus on what the Community Planning Partnership can do together to make a positive difference. Paul introduced David Stokoe to provide some reflections on the 2Sisters COVID outbreak in Coupar Angus and how services and the community responded – an example of effective community planning in action.

### **2SISTERS – COUPAR ANGUS**

David reminded delegates of the circumstances of the 2Sisters COVID outbreak in Coupar Angus in August 2020. Over 200 confirmed cases were recorded, the majority of whom were employees at the factory. Of the 1000 permanent and agency employees, the vast majority were foreign nationals. Language and communications quickly became a significant issue, alongside the need to offer emergency support to affected families. Partners worked effectively together to ensure that information was provided in languages and formats that local residents could access and understand. Through sharing information and intelligence, services were able to quickly identify and support vulnerable families, with crisis grants and food packages made available within 24 hours. Key lessons from the situation and response included:

- First impressions of communities and families do not always highlight vulnerability, deprivation is often hidden
- Inequality is complex and there are no easy solutions
- In a crisis, services are able to respond in an agile way, combining various skills and specialisms to support those in need

### **WORKSHOP SESSIONS**

There were three workshop sessions on Day 2, focusing on: mental health and wellbeing; skills, learning, development, and employability; and digital participation. Key points from these workshops included:

#### **Mental & Physical Wellbeing**

- There are underlying issues around access to affordable exercise and entertainment; maintaining a healthy diet; access to affordable equipment and resources; and developing or maintaining personal motivation and aspiration.
- We need safe spaces for “unstructured” play and outdoor activity. We can encourage people to get outside safely and securely. Perth and Kinross has significant local assets in every community, which could be promoted more fully.
- There is scope to further improve collaboration between all the agencies, it provides better outcomes, saves resources, and reduces competition between services. The offer to potential service users is disjointed, and they can be signposted to the wrong place.
- We need to go to people rather than wait for them to come to us.
- Interventions are needed for those who are most vulnerable. We need to consider what these individuals and families see as a valid and useful intervention when they are worried about putting food on the table. In these circumstances, sport or gardening (for example) are arguably unlikely to meet this test.

#### **Digital Participation**

- We need to better understand the levels of participation in Perth and Kinross, we need to know what our starting point is in order to measure impact.

- Partners should pool resources and collaborate on all of our activity around increasing digital participation. This requires a significant change in attitudes and cultures and supports the ethos of the Perth and Kinross Offer.
- Shared and consistent messaging and communications to services users about digital participation would be a positive development. We can highlight where help and technology are available and how support can be accessed. Language can be a real barrier and can prevent us from tackling the fear and stigma associated with being online.
- There have been some very successful local and community projects, which could be scaled up with appropriate support. Our collective experience of COVID suggests a local and personal response is more successful.
- We need to upscale recycling projects and involve private business wherever possible.

### **Skills, Learning, Development and Employability**

- Remote delivery makes support even more challenging and has links to digital connectivity.
- Impact of COVID on service provision is varied, with the rural sector more affected than Perth city.
- Some are finding themselves unemployed for the first time in years and are not sure where to start. We need to be better at reaching out to them.
- It is important to communicate our offer clearly and in a joined up way. We need to make our systems and pathways more understandable and demonstrate that all services are available, regardless of where in Perth and Kinross someone lives.
- Given our geography there are real challenges around access and widening the employment market. We should consider targeting skills development and employer support by locality, as opposed to a single Perth and Kinross approach.
- Lots of support is available, but it can be overwhelming and sometimes confusing. We should consider rationalising and joining up wherever possible.