



Inequality in Bath: Why it matters

Rosie Phillips, CEO, Developing Health & Independence (DHI)

is a charity working with vulnerable and socially excluded people across BNES.

Bath specific services include: Homeless Outreach, Reach (housing support) and supported housing; Drug and alcohol treatment; social prescribing.

Penny McKissock, CEO, Southside is a charity based in

Twerton offering targeted family support and domestic abuse services for high risk victims across B&NES. Sexual violence, mental ill health, substance abuse, debt, housing issues, poverty are very common issues for the individuals and families we support. Nearly 70% of our paid workers were previously service users

Context

- Marmot
“The lower ones social and economic status, the poorer one’s health is likely to be”
- The gap between the rich and poor is getting bigger
- Infant mortality and life expectancy figures are both moving in the wrong direction

Debt/fear of debt is often at the heart of inequality and the mental stress it creates.

- Higher rates of mental health problems and poorer physical health
- Lack of opportunity (poor employment, social and physical mobility)
- No buffer to life's up's and downs.
 - Near constant risk of **debt** and its crippling effects
 - Increased likelihood of drug or alcohol use becoming problematic
 - Increased likelihood of exposure to violence
 - Increased likelihood of being a victim of crime..... or of committing crime e.g. Domestic violence, drugs, anti social behaviour
-plus the significant costs of inequality on the wider community (crime, anti-social behaviour, costs to health and other statutory services and the welfare state)

Housing

Housing is the single biggest debt or cost for people

Severe lack of affordable housing for rent in Bath

Growing number of Reach clients with growing debts

Exacerbated by:

- Local Housing Allowance

- Welfare reforms (notably under-occupancy change and council tax benefit reduction)

- and* because universal credit default is that payment goes to tenant
....this has made landlords more risk averse

Case Study

A man with diabetes and considerable debt problems was being admitted to A&E frequently.

“He used A&E a lot as he simply went in to diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA), a life threatening condition. He was perfectly capable of understanding his diabetes but, through **debts** often could not afford food, let alone purchase a fridge and had become **completely despondent**. DHI referred him for debt advice... supported him applying to get a grant for a fridge and some basics he needed to live... **This client's A&E attendances have reduced by 50%**. He now largely manages at home and has joined a local club where he has made some connections, which has given his spirits a lift.”

Dr Richard Berkley

What can Bath City Forum do?

