

Act on Poverty

Transcript from Act on Poverty session three: Generous Stef Benstead, disability activist

I got to know Church Action on Poverty when I started going to some of their annual meetings. Church Action [on Poverty] was organising the Manchester Poverty Truth Commission. The Commission is 12 to 15 people who are in poverty, and then 12 to 15 business or civic leaders. So, we had people from the council, from the police, from the local universities and [from] different parts of the voluntary sector and so on. And these were people who were high up enough in their organisation, in their job role, that they had decision making power, because part of the point was that by bringing these people together you would shift the understanding of the business and civic commissioners, that ideas would come out of the commission for these people to go away and act on.

So, the commission was really good experience. The council were able to go away and change some of the stuff they do around council tax and people who are in council tax reverses. I know the police went away and changed some of their training. There are various different things that came out of that because by bringing people with lived experience, together with the people who make the decisions, you have that input into what are people's lives actually like, what are their actual issues, what are the reasons that they behave the way they do and what is therefore actually a helpful and accurate response. And by bringing people together like that you can change the way businesses act, you can change the policies they have.