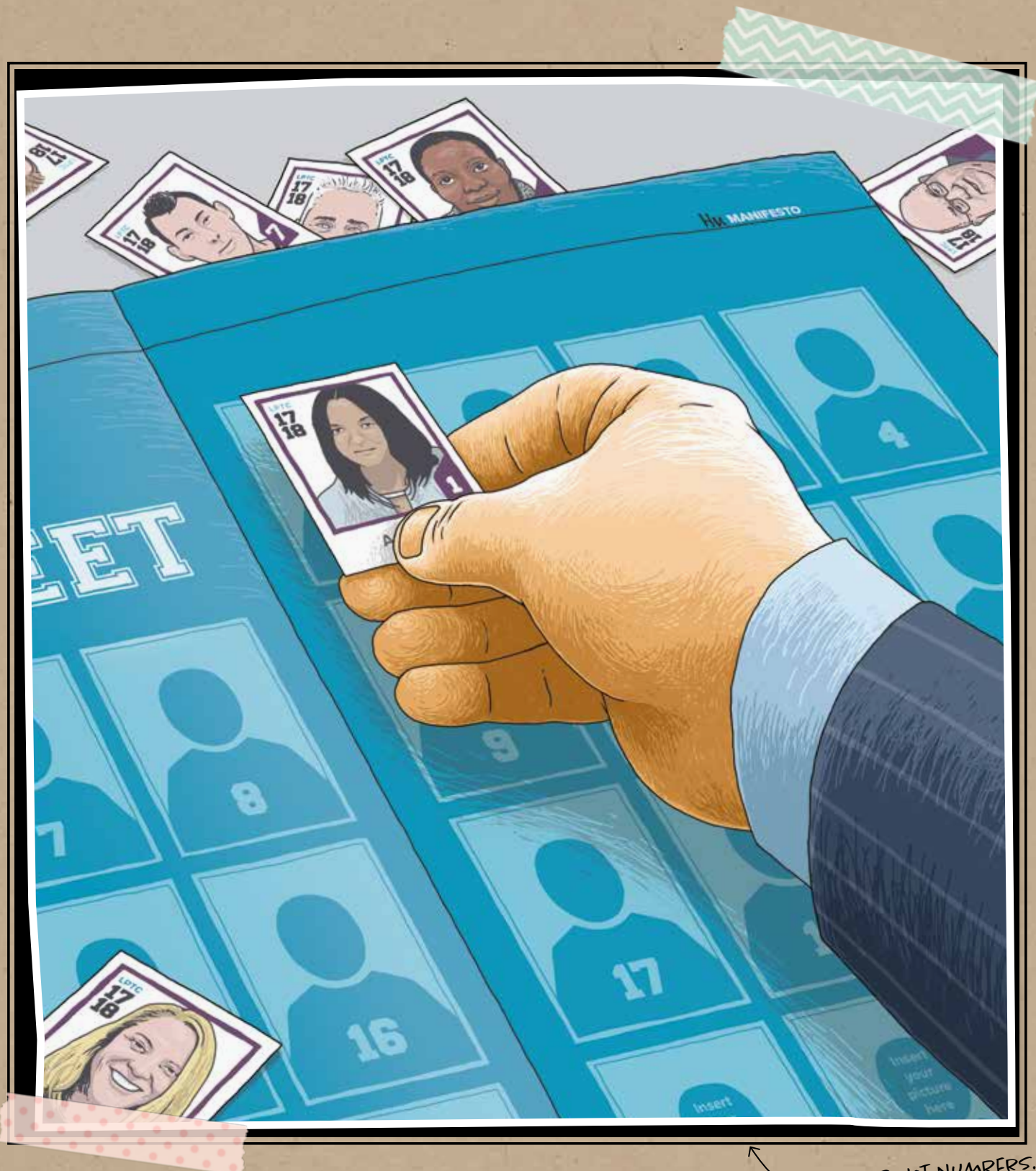


2016 - 2018

LEEDS POVERTY TRUTH COMMISSION

HUMANIFESTO



THIS NOTEBOOK BELONGS TO:

PEOPLE NOT NUMBERS...

POVERTY IS A PROBLEM FOR **EVERYONE** IN LEEDS.

THIS IS YOUR INVITATION TO BECOME PART OF THE SOLUTION

WE ARE THE LEEDS POVERTY TRUTH COMMISSION.

We believe that everyone can play a part in creating a fairer, more human society by changing attitudes that dehumanise.

Our Commissioners come from many different backgrounds. Crucially, about half of us have experienced, or are experiencing poverty. By sharing our stories and listening to each other, we have come up with some simple ways of changing our society for the better.

Over the next few pages, you'll find out how you can play a vital role in making our community in Leeds stronger, and more human.



NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US IS FOR US

POVERTY DEHUMANISES

Poverty dehumanises.

It's not just the constant struggle to buy enough food to feed the kids, or having to walk everywhere because you can't afford the bus fare. Paying more for your electricity and gas because you don't have the credit history for direct debit is tough. But it's more than that.

When you're experiencing poverty, what really grinds you down is the way other people perceive you. The media often portray low-income families in unsympathetic, and sometimes insulting terms. Feckless. Scroungers. Skivers. And this leads the public to think that the hard-up have only themselves to blame, and they treat them with disdain. Attempts to get help with money, benefits, housing and other basic essentials can sometimes be frustrating, complicated and bureaucratic. This reinforces the impression that anyone who is experiencing poverty is a problem.

Even people who aren't on a low income can be affected by the dehumanising effects of poverty in our city. People who deliver services to the low-paid often have to use systems that get in the way of treating their customers as real people with real lives and real stories. No one wants to make life harder for folk. Blaming 'the suits' does not make things better.

And any society is weaker when some of its members are excluded. Poverty dehumanises us all.

This Humanifesto is not part of the blame game. It's about finding how we can all make change happen...

And that includes **YOU**



People think poverty is having no money. It isn't. It's having no love and respect

41
GEOFF

THREE THINGS THAT GET IN THE WAY OF LIVING A HUMAN LIFE

#1

COMMUNICATIONS BREAK DOWN...

Do you suffer from brown envelope syndrome? What happens when the post comes through the door and it's just bills? Do you panic?

Once you've plucked up the courage to open the envelope you discover a 14-page letter. It doesn't seem like good news but you can't be sure. The technical jargon and small print make it difficult to understand. Communication has broken down.

And there's another kind of breakdown. Ask people what they think about those experiencing poverty, and you'll often hear some disturbing responses.

Too often, people think that those who are experiencing poverty have only themselves to blame. That the unemployed choose not to work.

That they are lazy. And that the benefits system is generous and is easy to access.

It's hardly surprising that people think like this, when you see the way that the issue of poverty is described in some newspapers and other media. "They're not poor," they howl, "there's no poverty here." Communication like this causes people to break down.

HELL is not a lifestyle choice.
NICK

Maria's 14-page letter about council tax and housing benefit left her confused. Even the one Stop centre managers and staff were confused. After hearing this story Leeds City Council has sought to make such letters simpler wherever possible.



BUT STORIES BUILD UP

Following a day long workshop with Poverty Truth Commissioners, Leeds City Council are redesigning services to empower frontline staff to act as internal advocates for those looking for support.

So, we've decided to tell our own stories, in our own words.

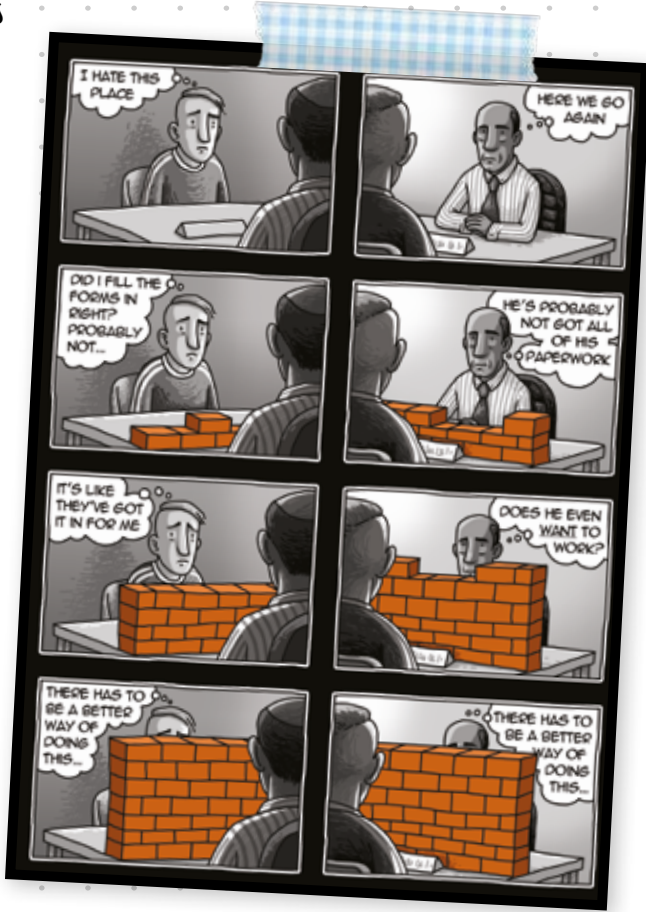
By telling our stories, and by increasing understanding of the issues, we can help to break down the barriers between those in poverty and those who haven't been there.

It's important that people know what poverty feels like, and how it happens. It's easier than many people think. And when it happens – when, for example, someone gets made redundant, or their relationship breaks up – it can be devastating.

Some of the stories are happy ones. We've experienced some real kindness and support from some wonderful people and organisations, and we enjoy talking about them.

READ OUR STORIES:
www.leedspovertytruth.org.uk/blog

WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE



It's also vital that journalists, bloggers and anyone who writes or comments on these issues use language that is inclusive, respectful and which doesn't stigmatise those who are experiencing poverty.

GET INVOLVED!

Are you a journalist? Do you comment on the issue of poverty? Talk to us about your next story. We can help you to make sure that you're using language that builds understanding. We can even help you to add colour to your story by interviewing real people with real experience.

Got your own story to tell? We'd love to hear from you. Join the conversation at www.facebook.com/PovertyTruth.



STORIES I COULD SHARE:

17
18

TEAM SHEET



Amina



Amina



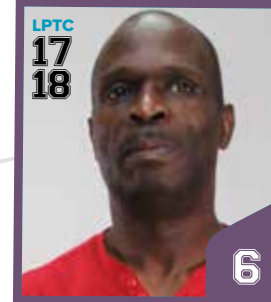
Andrea



Christine



Geoff



Howard



Jaimes



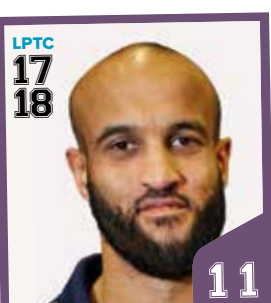
James



James



James



Jamie



Julia



Lee



Lee



Lisa



Lucinda



Margaret



Maria



Mariama



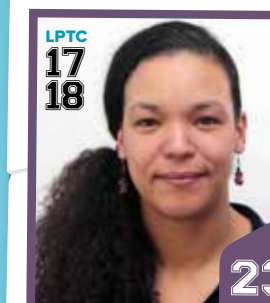
Mark



Mary



Nick



Nina



Paul



Paul



Sally-Anne



Sarah



Sellina



Steven

Our members are a mix of business leaders, civic decision makers, third-sector executives and 'experts by experience': people who have experienced, or are experiencing, poverty. By building relationships with each other we can start to look for solutions.

Leeds Poverty Truth Commission is one of nine Poverty Truth Commissions in the UK.

Insert
your
picture
here

will you join us?

30

THREE THINGS THAT GET IN THE WAY OF LIVING A HUMAN LIFE

#2 BARRIERS

#POVERTYTRUTH

Housing. Financial services. Utilities. Transport. Accessing any of these means navigating processes and systems. When you're in poverty, these processes can often work against you.

More and more, the processes are designed for people who have easy access to mobile phones and computers. They can involve hanging on the phone for a long time, which is fine unless you are struggling to afford to put credit on your phone.

Often, the language used on forms and websites can be confusing and unnecessarily complicated, creating yet another barrier and a lot of stress.

And when you have never needed to use a computer and suddenly you have to go online it can be bewildering. Before you know it, your benefits have been stopped having not applied for enough jobs.

Transport can also be a problem. When you can't afford a car, getting to a job or to college can mean long journeys on public transport with several connections. A well-designed public transport network can unlock opportunities for employment and education that a poorly-designed network can block.

When you live in rented accommodation, getting someone to fix leaks and other maintenance issues can be a struggle. It can feel as if you're at the bottom of someone's priority list. But to the tenant, it's not just another problem to be fixed. It's their home.

A host of legalities and policies erected barriers that trapped me into positions of poverty.

HOWARD

A limited and unreliable bus service in some areas of the city is a barrier to accessing services, buying healthy food and employability.



Visiting my grandchildren in Middleton from my home in Woodhouse can take me three hours on the bus.

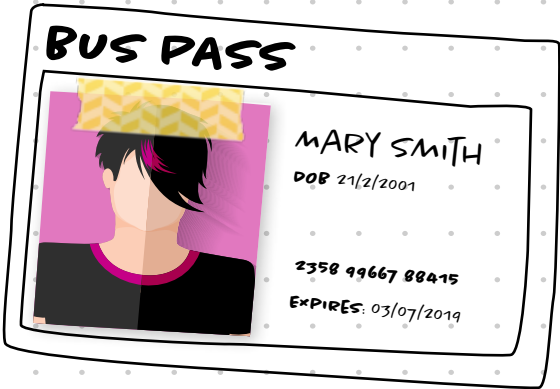
MARGARET

WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT THIS?

The cost of school uniforms can present parents with real difficulties. Every school should have a uniform recycling scheme.



WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE
To combat students' social isolation, Leeds City College were able to negotiate 24/7 bus passes for students.



YOU CAN HELP!

Are you a business leader? We can work with you to review your processes to check that they offer a high level of service to all of your customers – including those on a low income.

Do you design processes and programmes in the public or third sectors? Let us help you to make sure that they are as clear and as helpful as possible.

TAKE A MOMENT. GRAB A PEN. BE PART OF THE SOLUTION

BARRIERS I'M AWARE OF

HOW I CAN BREAK THEM DOWN

THREE THINGS THAT GET IN THE WAY OF LIVING A HUMAN LIFE

#3 ISOLATION

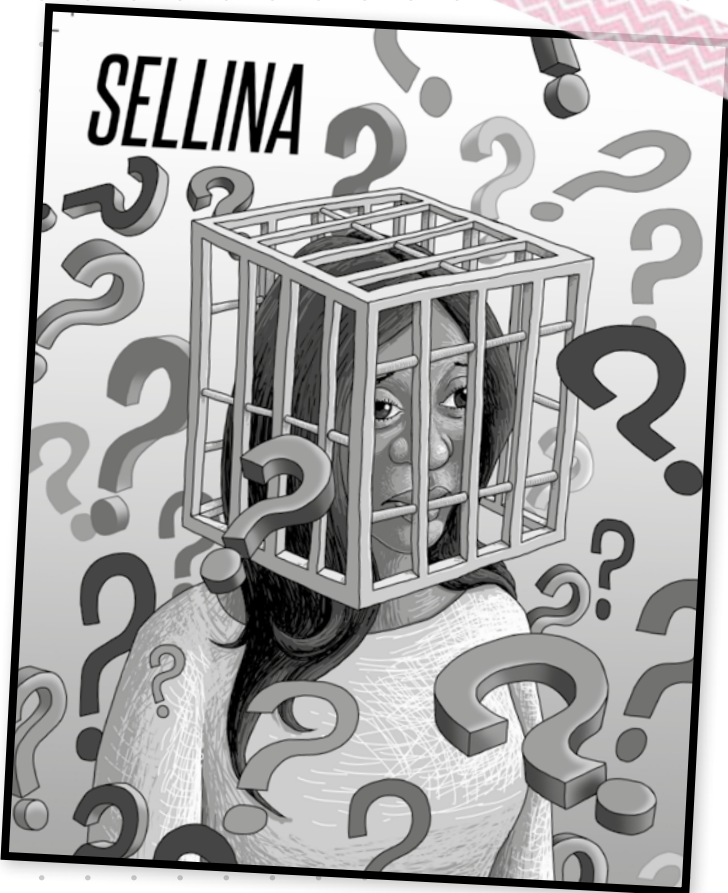
It's possible to be surrounded by 751,000 people and still be alone.

Despite being the UK's third-most populous city, Leeds can be a lonely place when you're experiencing poverty.

Most people go out to meet people. But when you're experiencing poverty, you can't afford to go to the pub, a café, or the cinema. So you end up staying at home. And your feeling of self-worth can suffer. When you don't talk to anyone for days on end, you start to believe that nobody would want to hear what you've got to say anyway.

The effects of isolation include feeling unworthy, worsening mental and physical health, withdrawal from society, loss of livelihood, lashing out at society, substance abuse and, in some extremely sad cases, suicide.

The downward spiral is expensive and increases the strain on institutions like the NHS.



After you've been taken to a detention centre in the middle of the night, the feeling of being trapped remains long after you've been released.

Listening is important because the degree to which we listen is proportional to the changes that happen.

LISA

LET'S STICK TOGETHER

Increasingly, community organisations are there when people hit rock bottom. Supporting people as they try to piece their lives together again.

But it's being with others that builds us up. Gardening with neighbours. Listening to each other's stories. Eating together at a community café. Sharing our experiences. Dealing with issues together. Singing, dancing, running, walking, creating, all make us feel alive. Doing more of this will help Leeds become a truly human city.

Doing things together is crucial to building relationships with one another – even when it is out of tune carol singing!



WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

When Amina and her young family were evicted by a private landlord, LATCH found accommodation and supported them in a time of crisis.




Simple acts can have enormous effects. Just saying hello and offering a smile can make a difference to someone who is feeling isolated. A cup of tea and a friendly ear could help to rebuild confidence and make someone feel that the world is a friendlier place.

THREE PEOPLE I COULD HAVE A CUPPA WITH THIS WEEK...

☐
☐
☐

WAYS TO LIVE A HUMAN LIFE IN LEEDS



It is a scandal that a wealthy city like Leeds has so many inhabitants who experience poverty. But we can all play a part in reducing its dehumanising effects. We invite all residents and workers in Leeds to join us in creating a fairer, stronger and happier society.

GET IN TOUCH.

Journalist, or work in the media? Talk to us about your next story or opinion piece.

Business leader? Let us assist you to design services and processes that help your low-income customers.


Policy developer? We can provide valuable insight into your policy proposals from people with real experience of the issues.

Work in the third sector? Ensure that you have a trustee or management group member who has a lived experience of the issue you are working in.

Resident? Try building your community by meeting your neighbours for a cup of tea and a chat.

Experiencing poverty? Share your stories and experiences with us.

Human being? Learn more about what life is like for other people – visit our website and read our stories.

 [Facebook.com/PovertyTruth](https://www.facebook.com/PovertyTruth)

 [@PTCLeeds](https://twitter.com/PTCLeeds)

www.leedspovertytruth.org.uk

admin@leedspovertytruth.org.uk

Call us on 07767 700635

© Leeds Poverty Truth Commission 2018

We are an independent project, brought together by a number of different partners and hosted by Leeds based charity Together for Peace.

In order that the Commission retains its independence it is supported financially by a patchwork of organisations and funding bodies. These include: Big Lottery; Joseph Rowntree Foundation; Leeds Christian Community Trust; and Leeds City Council.



Supported by

