

About You	
1.	Your Name
	Agnese Carter
2.	Your Employer / Organisation
	Aberdeenshire Council
3.	Your Position
	Child and Poverty Engagement Worker
4.	Your E-Mail at Work
	agnese.carter@aberdeenshire.gov.uk
5.	Your Address at Work
	N/A
6.	Your Telephone Number at Work
	N/A
7.	Your Role in the Project
	Coordinator
An Introduction to the Project	
8.	Please provide a short summary of the project
	The Aberdeenshire Lived Experience Online Forum is a discussion group hosted by Aberdeenshire Council. Its main objective is to provide an online space for the Council and people with lived experience of poverty to discuss the challenges of living in poverty and gather experiences around accessing services locally in Aberdeenshire. Another purpose of these sessions is to improve available support services through getting feedback. The discussions occur every month. Most participants are single-parents who log in anonymously to the platform to protect their privacy. The Council has identified that this project had a positive impact as it helped to improve support services, the participants access different support services and organisations, and build a support network for people facing similar challenges.
9.	Does the project have specific aims and/or objectives?
	The principal objective of the forum is to discuss and engage with those with lived experience of poverty in Aberdeenshire. Another objective is to improve the support services which Aberdeenshire Council delivers.
10.	Does the project have a title?
	Aberdeenshire Lived Experiences Online Forum
11.	Has it finished? Is it on-going? Does it have an end date?
	It is an on-going project with no end date.
12.	Which groups of people, if any, are targeted by the service provided?
	The project targets low income households, and aims to include as many community members as possible. Currently, the primary participants are parents with various vulnerability characteristics.

13.	How many people have been served by the project?	
	Approximately 40 people.	
14.	Where is it delivered?	
	Online.	
15.	When did it start?	
	2020.	
The Initial Idea		
16.	Who had the initial idea?	
	The idea came from Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Coordinator Annette Johnston. She was working in the Aberdeenshire Council Inequalities Team in 2020 and they were exploring new ways to engage with communities in Aberdeenshire.	
17.	How did the idea for the project come about?	
	In 2020, Aberdeenshire Council received funding from the Scottish Government to create a lived experience parent group for families living in poverty. This was managed by a paid Child Poverty Engagement Worker. An online lived experience group that could facilitate community participation was designed to increase engagement during COVID-19.	
18.	Did you draw on any published reports / papers / research evidence or practice you had seen elsewhere to inform your plans?	
	No. In the initial stages of the project there wasn't enough information about lived experience groups (i.e., methods and cases). Agnese developed the group using her experience in social sciences and participatory methods.	
19.	Who was involved in developing the initial idea of the project?	
	The project was supported by other service areas within the Council, such as the Equalities Team and the Employment and Financial Inclusion Group. Both teams were interested in understanding how to improve their involvement with and support services for the communities of Aberdeenshire.	
20.	Were those with lived experience of poverty involved in developing the initial idea of the project?	
	No, but Agnese identified that anonymity was essential for facilitating participation and protecting privacy.	
21.	What funding was used, if any, to support the development of the initial idea of the project?	
	Scottish Government provided funding for the lived experience group.	
22.	What in-kind resources were needed when developing the initial idea of the project?	
	Facilities	N/A
	Equipment	N/A
	Local Knowledge	Agnese's understanding and experience supported the initial meetings.
	Food and Drink	N/A

23.	What, if any, barriers did you have to overcome when developing the initial idea of the project?
	The lack of information and cases about lived experience of poverty was an initial barrier for understanding how to manage the group. The group also started just before COVID-19 so there was a high level of uncertainty about how people would engage with online forums.
24.	What, if anything, was helpful when developing the project's initial idea?
	Securing funding and the local knowledge of participants were critical elements for developing the forum.
25.	What was the timeline between the initial idea and the start of the project?
	A couple of months.
26.	Who made the decision to introduce the project?
	Agnese Carter
The Early Development of the Project	
27.	Did you run a pilot project or carry out a feasibility study?
	No
Accessing the Service and Engaging with Service Users	
28.	Is there a referral process? If yes, how does the referral process work (self-referral, referred by other agencies, identified from an existing database)
	Protecting participants' privacy drives the project's referral system. This requires potential participants to refer themselves. Anyone interested in participating in the forum must contact Agnese Carter directly through email (the contact details are available on the forum's website). Once contact is made, Agnese creates an anonymous profile which allows them access to the forum. The administrative work associated with running the Forum requires 1-2 hours' time investment per month, with an additional 1-2 hours per month for referrals for Lived Experience Members to engage with partnership services. (There are a number of other responsibilities associated with the maintenance of the Forum requiring a larger time commitment, including for example approximately 1 hour per month for each Lived Experience Member to engage with the Worker in charge).
29.	How are potential clients made aware of the project?
	Potential clients can be informed about the project through its website, social media, by partners working with vulnerable community members, and through word-of-mouth. The project's website contains an overview of the forum and the contact details of the Child Poverty Engagement Worker so people can contact them to be included in the sessions. Social media (Facebook) is used to communicate upcoming events and meetings, allowing participants to share it through their social networks. Vivid, verbal testimonies about the sessions allows new participants to manage their expectations about the forum.
30.	How do you keep in touch with service users? Do your service users have a preferred method of contact?
	Every participant engages differently, from phone calls, email exchanges and word-of-mouth. All contact is managed directly through the Child Poverty Engagement Worker.

Working With People with Lived Experience of Poverty	
31.	Are those with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>delivering</u> the project?
	No, although the project receives annual feedback from Lived Experience members and improvements are made to the project and its ongoing work.
32.	Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>managing</u> the project or project governance?
	No.
33.	Are people with lived experience of poverty involved <u>in any other aspect</u> of the project?
	Participants usually benefit from different Aberdeenshire Council support services and receive other participatory opportunities which are carried out within the project or across communities by other partnership organisations. The forum provides a safe and anonymous space that allows them to share their challenges related to support services without feeling exposed or at risk of losing help. However, some participants don't mind speaking up more openly and are also happy to engage with other activities such as taking part in expert panels or participatory budgeting activities.
Leadership, Governance and Partnership Working	
34.	Who is responsible for managing the project?
	Child Poverty and Engagement Worker
35.	Is there a Project Steering Group? <i>If yes, who is involved in this and how does it work.</i>
	No.
36.	If there is no Steering Group, what governance arrangements are in place to review strategy and performance?
	Forums 's strategy and performance is reviewed on annual basis by Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Strategic Partnership and by the Aberdeenshire's Community Planning Board. The work of the forum is also highlighted within the Tackling Poverty & Inequalities Annual report and the Local Child Poverty Action report, both are scrutinised by Area and policy Committees within Aberdeenshire Council.
Links to Wider Policies, Strategies and Statutory Requirements	
37.	Is the project part of a wider anti-poverty strategy?
	Yes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The project responds to the objectives of the Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership. The objectives involve reducing, preventing, and mitigating the effects of poverty. - The department that the Forum is under (Tackling Poverty and Inequalities) is a lead on developing the Child Poverty Action Plan and on reporting on it; the participants of the Forum provide their input on Child Poverty Planning and Reporting.
38.	Is the project part of any other strategy?
	Yes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The project is providing evidence and a community voice for Aberdeenshire's Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Input from the Lived Experience participants has contributed to Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Budget plan for Aberdeenshire Council Strategy and Innovation Team. - The Lived Experience work contributes to Aberdeenshire Integrated Assessment. - Lived Experience expert panels have gathered information around food for Nourish Scotland Project, Rural premium costs for Poverty Alliance, and Cash First Approach for the Scottish Government.
39.	Is the project delivering a service that is a statutory commitment. <i>If so, please give details.</i>
	No.
Funding	
40.	Who funds the project? <i>Please give details.</i>
	The Scottish Government.
41.	How is the project funded?
	N/A
42.	How much does the project cost?
	N/A
43.	Is future funding based on pre-agreed outcomes or outputs being delivered?
	No.
Staffing and Resources	
44.	Which partners are involved in delivering the project (local authorities, organisations, community groups, etc.)?
	Only local authorities.
45.	Which paid staff are involved in delivering the project?
	Child Poverty Community Engagement Worker
46.	Are volunteers involved in delivering the project?
	No.
47.	What in-kind resources do you need to deliver your project?
	Facilities N/A
	Equipment PCs
	Local Knowledge Knowledge of community engagement, local support network, and poverty-related needs
	Food and Drink N/A
48.	For each of the in-kind resources listed above, who provides it?
	Facilities The online platform is hosted in the Aberdeenshire Council domain
	Equipment Aberdeenshire Council
	Local Knowledge Child and Poverty Engagement Worker
	Food and Drink N/A

49.	Did you have to buy or develop new IT systems, software (databases, apps) or technology to deliver your project?	
	Not mentioned. However, the online forum is hosted in the Aberdeenshire Council domain and IT maintenance is linked to the Council as well.	
50.	Was additional staff training required to deliver your project?	
	No. The delivery of the project relies on the experience of the Child and Poverty Engagement Worker. This entails them applying participatory methods.	
Monitoring and Evaluation		
51.	What information, if any, do you collect about your project?	
	Number of users	Approximately 30 to 40 users per month
	Profile of users	Families, mainly single-parent households
	Experience of users	No
	Anything else	No
52.	How often is data collected? Who collects the data?	
	The Child and Poverty Engagement Worker collects data about the number of participants, the principal topics discussed, anecdotal information about the access and provision of support services and suggestions to improve the delivery of services. This data is collected monthly during the discussion meeting, and, as with participants, data is inputted anonymously. Also, the Child and Poverty Engagement Worker conducts online surveys about the topics to be discussed.	
53.	Do you have baseline data on what things were like before the start of the project or before users started the project?	
	No.	
54.	Do you produce an annual report?	
	An annual report is provided to the Council's office. It collates information about attendance statistics, topics discussed, and feedback provided through the forum. Some of the information collected is reported in the LOIPs, as evidence of the Community Planning Partnership.	
55.	In what ways, if at all, do you use the data that you collect to adapt the service that you provide?	
	The data collected provides feedback to the different offices, services, and frontline workers of the Aberdeenshire Council. All the data collected is anecdotal.	
56.	Have you employed an external organisation to formally evaluate your project?	
	No.	
57.	If yes, in what ways, if at all, have you used the External Project evaluation to adapt the service that you provide.	
	No.	
58.	Do you intend to employ an external organisation to evaluate the service that you provide in the future?	
	N/A	
Reach and Impact		
59.	What difference has the project made?	

	<p>The project provides a space for people with lived experience of poverty to safely express their opinions and experiences of the support services in Aberdeenshire. The project helps its participants find the support they needed, either with programmes or projects run by the Council and other local third sector organisations. Those participating in the forum feel valued because their discussions impact the different support services delivered. The group helps the Council understand various communities and what does and does not work for them. The project has also been of help in designing and improving services, policy work and budget allocation.</p> <p>The Child Poverty Engagement Worker supports the families through 1:1 monthly catch ups. During these meetings the families can raise challenges or areas they require support . The worker will then offer to link them in with various services according to individual needs at that time. A “Warm Handover” is then put in place to ensure the families do not need to repeat their story, which avoids retraumatising them. This approach has had positive outcomes for families.</p> <p>Any new projects or pathways developed are shared with participants via email so Lived Experiences members can access the service by themselves or ask for help from the Child Poverty Engagement Worker to access them.</p>
60.	<p>How do you know this? What evidence demonstrates impact (metrics, interviews, feedback)?</p> <p>The positive impact is measured through feedback after the sessions and the design of the information flyers and language of the front-line workers.</p>
61.	<p>To what extent have the aims of the project been achieved?</p> <p>The project has achieved its aims by creating a lived experience network that gives different communities in Aberdeenshire a platform to be heard. Participants and those involved recognise the relevance of the group in raising awareness and improving the delivery of the services.</p>
62.	<p>How, if at all, have conditions changed since the project was introduced?</p> <p>The primary change was the inclusion of new topics and discussions about the increased cost of living. This resulted in wider participation.</p>
63.	<p>If yes, has the project had the capacity to meet these changing conditions and demand?</p> <p>Yes. The forum supported the creation of two projects associated with young people. The second project involves building a network of lived experiences.</p>
64.	<p>Has the project had any unexpected or unintended outcomes?</p> <p>One unintended outcome is the shared support that the participants provide during the discussions. This means that others’ experience is translated into guidance, which helps foster a sense of community in the forum.</p>
65.	<p>In your opinion, is the project having an impact on tackling child poverty? If so, please describe in what ways.</p> <p>Yes. It is providing a platform for participants to voice their opinion, increasing awareness and inclusion about the conditions and circumstances for accessing the services, and highlighting available support.</p>
Learning from Experience	
66.	What is working well?

	Engagement with participants is working well as there is continuous participation. Feedback has been positive and participants feel like they belong.	
67.	What, if anything, is working less well?	
	There is always uncertainty in the attendance of the meetings.	
68.	What are the key learning points that you'd like to share with other practitioners? For example, is there anything that you would do differently?	
	N/A	
69.	What plans do you have to develop or expand the project in the future?	
	The project is already expanding with additional projects for young people and the creation of a lived experience network.	
70.	How easily do you think your project could be replicated in another setting?	
	N/A	
Social Media and Further Information		
71.	Please enter social media contact details and weblinks to supporting documents or resources below:	
	Web Pages	https://www.ouraberdeenshire.org.uk/our-priorities/tackling-poverty-inequalities/lived-experiences-online-forum/
	Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/ParentsComeTogetherinAberdeenshire/about
	Instagram	N/A
	Twitter	N/A
	Tik-Tok	N/A
GDPR Consent (Please state yes or no in the box)		
I give my permission to be named in the tackling poverty locally directory and associated public outputs.		Yes
I give permission for our organisation to be named in the tackling poverty locally directory and associated public outputs.		Yes
I give permission for me to be contacted by directory users.		Yes