

# **Recession, Poverty & Sustainable Livelihoods in Bradford (Oxfam)**

## **February 2010 – November 2010**

This project is a partnership between Oxfam and the International Centre for Participation Studies (ICPS) at Bradford University. Oxfam will work with ICPS to explore the impact of the recession on poverty in the Bradford District, and identify key changes that local services and policymakers could make, to enable communities to become more resilient to external shocks in the future.

There are two strands to the project:

- Qualitative research to document the impact of the recession on people in poverty in Bradford.
- A review of the relevant policies, institutions (including local services) and practices that impact upon them.

The research team will combine this information to identify interventions that would strengthen people's existing livelihood strategies and reduce the barriers they face.

## **Aims**

- Document the impact of the recession on the assets, livelihood strategies and activities of people in poverty in Bradford;
- Explore how these impacts differ, depending on gender, ethnicity and household composition;
- Identify changes (in practice and policy) that would make the livelihoods of people on low incomes in Bradford more resilient, and help to mitigate the worst effects of the recession;
- Increase understanding of the dynamics of poverty, and the vulnerabilities that increase the likelihood of persistent or recurrent poverty.

## **Research design and methods**

We will:

- Carry out qualitative studies with people living in low income households in Bradford.
- Recruit and train peer researchers with experience of poverty to participate in the research process.

# **Cohesion in Bradford: disadvantage, solidarity and recession**

## **(University of Westminster)**

**February 2010 – November 2010**

### **Background, Scope and Aims**

Community cohesion continues to be a contested concept but there is growing consensus around the links between material disadvantage and the quality of community relationships. Those relationships are complex; cutting, for example, across generation, ethnicity, faith, gender, class and institutions. Recession and growing disadvantage potentially worsens community relationships, including via a lack of resources fuelling racialised resentment. Both ordinary people and local and national institutions and policy makers have a contribution to make in identifying solutions.

This project seeks to improve understanding of the current and longer term implications of recession in Bradford for community relationships. The research questions include:

- In what ways is the recession a) bringing communities together to find collective solutions; or b) exacerbating tensions across ethnic religious, generational or other boundaries?
- What are the views of local people and agencies on the likely longer-term social implications of recession on community relationships in Bradford?
- What initiatives and policies are in place to support community relationships through recession?
- How is the Third Sector involved in supporting community relationships and is it being adequately supported?
- What practical actions and policies could be developed to tackle the longer-term implications of recession in relation to community relationships?

### **Project Design**

The research will deploy a qualitative, iterative research design with an emphasis on bringing people and institutions (within and beyond Bradford) together in dialogue.

## **Mental health, resilience and the recession in Bradford**

**(Leeds Metropolitan University)**

**February 2010 – November 2010**

This project will explore the scope of services in Bradford that aim to help people to protect, maintain or enhance their resilience and mental health in the context of an economic recession. In this study the expression 'mental health' refers to both the aetiology, prevalence, and treatment of mental health problems, from stress and anxiety to schizophrenia and dementia, and to that complex subjective experience that is referred to as 'mental well-being', 'positive mental health', or, more generally, 'well-being'. Mental well-being encapsulates both people's sense of happiness and satisfaction with life and their sense of purpose and engagement in life; therefore it does not simply consist of the absence of mental health problems. Similarly, the concept of resilience, i.e. the capability of individuals and communities to cope successfully in the face of significant adversity or risk, such as a recession, moves away from a strict medical understanding of mental health.

This project will focus on people who are in a 'transition phase' in the job market; these are young people (aged 16-25) who are entering the job market for the first time or who have recently entered the job market and older workers who are closer to retirement age.

The project will collect both qualitative and quantitative data and semi-structured interviews will be undertaken with key stakeholders of mental health and other support services in Bradford.

# **Bradford District – Weathering Recession and Surviving the Upturn: What are the prospects for Bradford businesses as the economy comes out of recession?**

**(Better for Everyone)**

**February 2010 – November 2010**

This research project is part of the 'Bradford – Living through Change' programme which focuses on the impact of the recession and identifying opportunities for strengthening Bradford during and after the recession.

Whilst there is some evidence to suggest that the Bradford economy has proved relatively resilient in the current recession, there is concern that the lack of up-to-date data means that it is still not clear how well the majority of Bradford businesses are coping with the recession.

It is important that the District has a better understanding of this moving forward that requires a strong evidence base in order to direct business support and other interventions more effectively in the medium to long term.

## **Aims**

- To gather detailed evidence to establish the impacts of the recession on business and enterprise in the Bradford District.
- To map business support initiatives and policies and identify significant gaps in support.
- To understand how Bradford businesses are positioned to make the most of an economic upturn.
- To identify key actions and policies that should be developed to support Bradford businesses going forward.

To provide information that will guide developments in key policy areas relating to employment and skills, business development, transport and regeneration.

Stakeholder engagement is a key feature of this project. The consortium will seek to look not just at statistics generated by the research but also to understand the people and businesses behind them, their perspectives, needs and aspirations. The work will be embedded into regeneration and business support structures across the district in order to inform service delivery planning and ensure effective interventions are delivered to support local businesses and employment.

The research consists of both qualitative and quantitative elements that will involve significant stakeholder engagement and feedback.