

The APLE Collective are passionate advocates for meaningful change and a firm believer in the power of lived experience to drive positive outcomes. As policy and decision-makers, it is imperative that the value of the voices of those with lived experience, particularly when addressing complex issues such as poverty, are recognised.

The voices of individuals who have experienced poverty firsthand offer invaluable insights, perspectives, and solutions that cannot be replicated through academic research or statistical analysis alone. These individuals bring a depth of understanding and empathy that is essential for crafting effective and equitable policies and initiatives.

It is time to take a proactive approach to listening to lived experience voices and involving them in decision-making processes. Here are some key considerations:

- **Recognising the Power of Voice:** Lived experience activists, artists, practitioners, and community members possess unique insights and expertise that are essential for informed decision-making. By valuing their voices, we can foster greater empathy, understanding, and solidarity within our communities.
- **Creating Accessible Spaces for Participation:** It is crucial to ensure that venues, online platforms, and engagement processes are accessible to all individuals, regardless of their background or circumstances. This includes addressing digital exclusion and providing necessary support such as interpreters, childcare services, and accessible materials.
- **Prioritising Co-Creation and Collaboration:** Meaningful engagement requires a collaborative approach that values active listening, co-design, and mutual respect. By co-creating solutions with lived experience voices, we can develop more inclusive and effective strategies for addressing poverty.
- **Building Trust and Relationships:** Trust is the foundation of meaningful engagement. Policy and decision-makers must invest time and effort in building genuine relationships with lived experience activists and community members, prioritising trust-building over quick fixes or tokenistic gestures.

Who are the APLE collective?

APLE is a national collective of individuals and organisations with lived experience of poverty.

Our aim is to create a sustainable, grassroots network across the UK to raise awareness of poverty, challenge the stigma surrounding it and contribute to its eradication. As a network, we promote the voices of those with lived experience of poverty and we work collaboratively with others to influence change.

Our partners include the Good Things Foundation, Ada Lovelace Institute, Trussell Trust, APPG on Poverty, APPG on Data Poverty and Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Addressing Poverty with Lived Experience

The Digital Divide



Every aspect of a person's life is impacted by poverty and the digital divide. As the pandemic has played out over the last few years and the Cost of Living Crisis has hit low income communities, one thing has remained constant, the almost exclusively reliance of government, health education and charity sector reliance on digital communication.

As society re-opened post-covid, the digital by default approach has continued. For those on a low income who might have one device but not enough data to fully participate online or no device or data, this creates barriers that can feel insurmountable. The APLE Collective have seen the digital divide become more complex and woven into the Cost of Living Crisis for people living in Poverty.

The APLE Collective is concerned that people experiencing poverty will be pushed further into digital exclusion and isolation because unavoidable spending on energy and food will take up the lion's share of their budget. Internet access will continue to be seen as a luxury rather than what it is, an essential in the modern-day UK- **and that's just not right.**

In the **short term**, we believe that steps can be taken to tackle this digital divide by:

Encouraging the telecommunications industry to **lift the data caps** on a pay-as-you-go and rolling pay monthly tariff.

Making mobile 'hot spots' available **free of use and accessible to all.**

In the **longer term**, we ask for participation, voice and connection.

We ask for **free Wi-Fi for Low-Income Groups.**

The opportunity to discuss how people with lived experience of socioeconomic disadvantage and who directly face this challenge of digital division are able to ensure support packages to build skills, knowledge and confidence are designed to the best effect.

Read our full Digital Divide briefing paper [here](#).

Member organisation election messaging

ATD Fourth World

Parents in poverty are significantly more likely to receive child protection interventions and are at greater risk of their children being removed from their care. Parent-to-parent advocacy is a formal arrangement provided by some local authorities, where parents who have experience of successfully engaging with such interventions are recruited and trained to support other parents going through similar situations¹. Although there is evidence² that parent-to-parent advocacy improves child protection outcomes, this form of advocacy is not available in many local authorities. ATD Fourth World is calling on the next government to legislate for the mandatory provision of paid parent-to-parent advocates by all local authorities in England and Wales.

1 <https://atd-uk.org/2023/06/06/parent-to-parent-advocacy-peer-support-and-family-advocacy/>

2 New York study - Interview with Mike Arsham (youtube.com)

LIFE

LIFE would like any new government, or authority to focus on three main things:

1. A sensible, sustainable and affordable rent cap being introduced across social, council and private housing for fair rent aligned to income.
2. A full transformative planning process for social housing to be at the heart of every new development, not tokenism.
3. Create a government/public led, not for profit house builder to build mixed affordable homes with fair price purchase options and guarantor for borrowing purposes.
4. Council tax banding reformed to 2024 land value.

Member organisation election messaging

Thrive Teesside

Thrive Teesside want to ensure people with lived experience of poverty and socio-economic disadvantage can influence local decision making and national policy making. We are particularly keen on ensuring debt deductions from benefits are not pushing people further into poverty and that any deductions is agreed in partnership with people who are in debt. We are keen to ensure people get their correct entitlements - this specifically includes PIP. Physical and mental health is particularly spoken about and becoming an issue - in relation to accessing services and getting correct entitlements. We have a lack of investment in services and spaces and our services are either inaccessible or do not meet the needs. Stockton was described as a 'sh•thole' by James Cleverly MP and we are keen on tackling the stigma associated with people living in poverty and the 'blame' culture. Areas of disadvantage are so due to lack of investment, resources and policy not due to personal responsibility.

It is vital to acknowledge the skills and expertise within the lived experience community. We are more than a story, lived experience is an expertise that can inform debate and lead to positive change.

Involving lived experience voices in your work needs to have real world outcomes that are accountable. We need to ensure that people are invited to participate because you want them to be there. Ensure all people know what their part brings to the meeting.

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