

poverty truth Ilfracombe

Poverty in the UK

It has been almost 20 years since the last prolonged period of falling poverty.

In that time, poverty has increased and is deepening and the cost of living crisis continues to bite.

Certain groups have wholly unacceptably high rates of poverty.

It continues to affect peoples life chances and multiple outcomes (housing, homelessness, crime, addiction, educational attainment, lower pay, unemployment, low income, relationships and family, child development)

... the future remains deeply worrying

[The essential guide to understanding poverty in the UK 2023](#) (Joseph Rowntree Foundation)

- Poverty has been estimated to cost the healthcare system in the UK £29 billion a year.
- People in the least deprived areas can expect to live longer than those in the most deprived.
- 40% of adults in England aged 45-64 with below-average incomes have a limiting long-term illness, more than twice the rate of adults of the same age with above-average incomes.
- Children living in cold homes are more than twice as likely to suffer from a range of respiratory problems as those living in warm homes.
- Older people who have experienced disadvantage throughout their adult lives are at greater risk of reporting ill health and long-term illness
- Poverty is both a cause of mental health problems and a consequence ([Knifton et al., 2020](#))

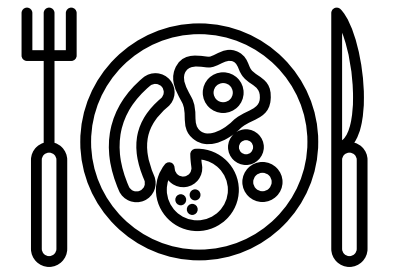
[Health at a Price - Reducing the impact of poverty 2021](#) (British Medical Association)

What is a Poverty Truth Commission?



[Vimeo link](#) (4 min video)

A 'slow cooked' relational approach



Starting by enabling conversations, promoting deep listening and shared understanding before jumping to finding solutions

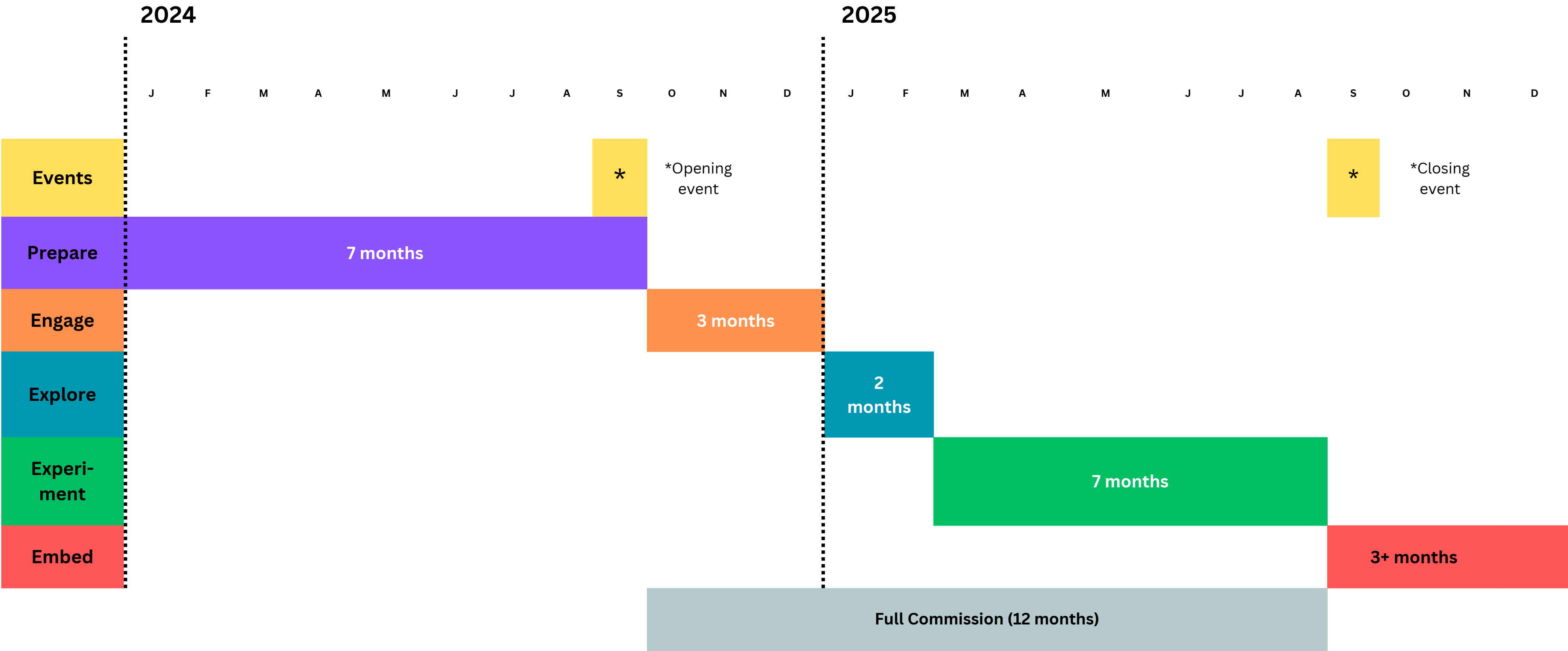
If a PTC were a (satisfying and enjoyable) meal...

- Slow-cooked (long-term, healthy change)
- Recipe differs (depending on local context)
- Base ingredients: Listening & Relationships
- Vital ingredient: People who bring their whole selves and are willing to share their stories
- Equal measures of: Bravery, vulnerability, kindness, trust, commitment, tears & laughter (mix together for cooking process to begin)



[Vimeo link \(3 min video\)](#)

We see more clearly by examining the local context and realising there are no quick fix solutions. The causes of poverty are systemic and it is not enough to be simply concerned with its symptoms. At the same time practical progress matters.



PTC Phases

1

Recruit & prepare

Community Commissioners

- Meet regularly as a group to get to know each other
- explore their experiences and decide what and how they would like to communicate poverty to their area
- Prepare for the Launch Event

Opening Event - Community commissioners communicate their understanding of 'poverty', sharing their lived experiences to better understand the nature of poverty in Ilfracombe, the underlying issues that create poverty and the effects. Setting the scene for the upcoming commission.

2

Engage - 3 months

Tasks Full commission meetings and 1-2-1s between commissioners

Attention Enabling conversations; promoting deep listening; shared understanding; setting the culture; building relationships

3

Explore - 2 months

Tasks Full Commission identifies the issues they would like to address

Attention Moving from the I to the We, Sense-making

4

Experiment - 7 months

We see more clearly by examining the local context and realising there are no quick fix solutions. The causes of poverty are systemic and it is not enough to be simply concerned with its symptoms. At the same time practical progress matters.

Tasks Create themed task groups, experimenting with issues + Full commission gatherings to share progress

Attention Supporting the task groups, Beginning to think about the end

5

Embed - Time 5 months

Tasks

Closing Event preparation, produce report

Work continues to help commissioners to make good on promises and embed what they have learnt into their communities, organisations and institutions.

Attention

Supporting commissioners as they move on, Deciding what poverty truth does next in your area

Closing event - to communicate the findings of the commission. This will include the work completed by task groups and the effect that the process has had on commissioners

Impacts from other commissions

Individual

- Community Commissioners have described increased confidence, motivation, work, training, friendships and empowerment through feeling heard.
- Civic leaders report a shift in personal perceptions, **fresh ways of understanding difficult problems** & drive to support change in their organisations

Services

The organisations most impacted are, unsurprisingly, those that have got most involved.

People are encouraged to become the change that they want to see in their own organisations and neighbourhoods

- **A social housing provider reported a 75% reduction in evictions since it changed its approach to managing tenancies.** It moved from a reprimand approach to offering a well-being service which focuses on early intervention and supporting people to sustain tenancies.
- A mental health provider focused on the person not the process, “put the computer aside & have a conversation with the person in front of you.”
- A council improved access to financial support by **changing colour/presentation of envelopes/letters** so it didn't look like ‘another bill’ left unopened
- DWP staff training (e.g resulted in removal of policy for clients to hold a yellow card to identify them, that inadvertently also humiliated them)
- Training module for Doctors/Social workers in how to reduce stigma / how to approach people in a more person-centred way

Impacts from other commissions ... cont'd

Policy

Policy change can take a long time so the direct link between the PTC and a change in in policy is not always known. Some changes have included:

- Salford Council removed council tax for under 25's / now issue birth certificate for free if homeless
- Gateshead City Council not removing soft furnishings out of social housing by default (£1k+ bill), also improves health
- Morecambe Bay, 100 + travellers saved from potential eviction by changing attitudes towards loss of a site they had lived on for over 30 years.
- Scotland instigated (& is expanding) a mentoring programme for civil servants where those with experience of poverty coached senior policy leaders

Public debate

PTCs help change the public debate about poverty across the UK.

- The Network amplifies the voice of commissions on themes and issues nationally including providing evidence to UK Government
- Birmingham commissioners spoke about the 'Poverty Premium' at the 2018 Conservative Party Conference; were interviewed by The Sun; and have been featured on BBC Panorama.
- Leeds commissioners produced 'Fighting Shame' a film about their experiences of poverty which was featured on the Guardian website and premiered at the Sheffield Documentary Film Festival.

A representative sample

Devon ICS Core 20 'Plus' categories

Individuals, families and communities experiencing coastal or rural deprivation

Individuals, families and communities adversely affected by differential exposure to the wider determinants of health – for example, those with unstable housing or homeless, vulnerable migrants and those experiencing domestic abuse

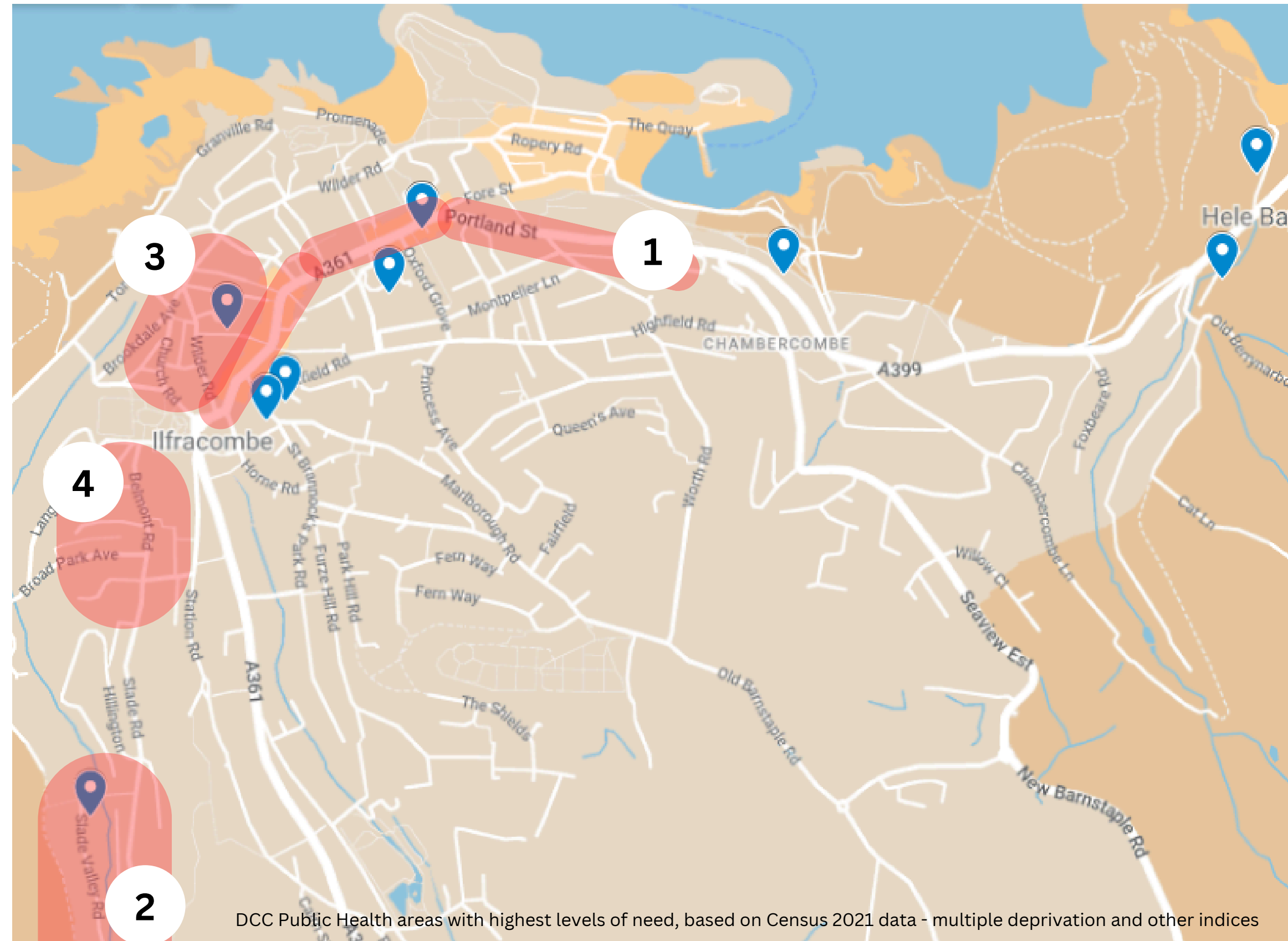
Persons with severe mental illness, learning disability and/or neurodiversity.

Certain groups have wholly unacceptably high rates of poverty (Joseph Rowntree Foundation)

- Larger families (3 or more children)
- Families whose childcare responsibilities limit their ability to work
- Many minority ethnic groups
- Disabled people
- Informal carers
- Families or partners not in work
- Part-time workers and the self-employed
- People living in rented accommodation
- Families claiming income-related benefits

10 areas of focus highlighted by Public Health Devon

1. High levels of private renting, less secure tenures, HMOs and living alone
2. Housing conditions and affordability, including hazards and health impacts
3. An ageing population with higher levels and earlier onset (older working age) of long-term conditions and multi-morbidity reflected in health expectancies
4. Low wages and greater cost of living impacts resulting in fuel and food poverty
5. Complex patterns of deprivation largely centred on High Street/private rented areas
6. Higher levels of smoking, obesity and substance misuse, lower physical activity
7. Higher levels of serious mental illness and self-harm
8. Job insecurity and seasonal patterns of employment/unemployment
9. Lower educational attainment/workforce skills and limited social mobility
10. Distance for health and care services and employment opportunities



DCC Public Health areas with highest levels of need, based on Census 2021 data - multiple deprivation and other indices

We need your help.

- We would like to build knowledge and enthusiasm for the work of the PTC in Ilfracombe by inviting senior leaders to the launch event on the 26th Sept.
- We may well request your organisation's involvement in the full commission - from October 2024 for 12 months. The commitment is to meet in person in Ilfracombe monthly for around 3 hours (includes lunch), with themed working groups arranged for specific tasks in the final 7 months.

We cannot be specific about which organisations at this point but we do know that social care, mental health, learning disabilities, housing, employment, education and commissioning services have been identified as well as utility/energy companies.

What is the best way to gain your organisation's support and involvement to:

- **attend the launch event**
- **commit to join the commission as a civic/business leader?**

Thank You for listening.