



Social Mobility  
Commission

## Commission Meeting Minutes

Wednesday 12 February 2020

10.00 – 4.30pm

The Learning Place, Portsmouth

<b>Attendees:</b>	<b>Commissioners</b>	<b>External Guests</b>	<b>Members of the Secretariat</b>
	Dame Martina Milburn (Chair)	Jo Duckett, <i>The Learning Place</i>	
	Sammy Wright	Theodora Brady, <i>Hastings</i>	
	Steven Cooper	<i>Opportunity</i>	
	Alastair DaCosta	<i>Area</i>	
	Pippa Dunn	Alison Garnham, <i>Child Poverty</i>	
	Liz Williams	<i>Action Group</i>	
	Jess Oghenegweke		
	Farah Storr		
	Harvey Matthewson		

**Apologies:** Sam Friedman, Sandra Wallace, Saeed Atcha, Jody Walker

### 1. Visit programme

1.1 Commissioners visited various initiatives in and around the Portsmouth area which were designed to improve outcomes for those in challenging or disadvantaged circumstances.

1.2 The first visit was to Motiv8, a youth club in Gosport which provides employability skills, mental health support and a range of positive activities for young people to participate in. Commissioners were impressed with the dedication of the staff and the success of the organisation in the context of a challenging funding climate.

1.3 Commissioners also visited the Google Digital Garage in the centre of Portsmouth – a pop up digital skills centre run by Google to help adults with improving their digital skills.

## **2. Commission meeting**

### **Introductions**

2.1 The Chair began with apologies and an overview of the agenda. The Director of Secretariat welcomed and introduced external guests to the meeting.

2.2 Jo Duckett welcomed the Commission to Portsmouth and to the Learning Place.

### **3. Hastings Opportunity Area**

3.1 Theodora Brady from Hastings Opportunity Area was invited to speak. She outlined her role as the interface between DfE and the OA's partnership board. She set out the four objectives of Hastings Opportunity Area, one of which is tackling mental health challenges among young people. She described their work and the challenges faced.

3.2 Commissioners asked a range of questions on the mental health work in Hastings.

3.3 Theodora drew parallels and set out the differences between Hastings and other coastal communities. The Commission noted that the resource levels and layers of support available in urban hubs, particularly in London, were not readily available in more isolated communities such as Hastings. However, there are some coastal and rural communities in the south coast whose greater remoteness and isolation led to a severe lack of resource infrastructure.

3.4 The Commission thanked Theodora for her contribution to the meeting.

### **4. Child Poverty Action Group**

4.1 Alison Garnham from the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) was invited to speak. She highlighted that Child Poverty in the UK has been rising but that it is responsive to policy interventions. The Commission discussed the reasons why child poverty has been rising and agreed that it remained a significant structural barrier to social mobility and re-emphasised its commitment to addressing it.

4.2 Alison was thanked for her contributions to the meeting.

*External guests left the meeting.*

### **5. Recent developments**

5.1 The Chair announced that Steven Cooper and Sandra Wallace were appointed as Deputy Chairs of the Social Mobility Commission.

5.2 The Chair updated the meeting on recent senior stakeholder meetings including with the Secretary of State for Education, the Metro Mayors of

Greater Manchester and Liverpool City Region, the permanent secretary at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), a junior minister at the Department for Transport (DfT) and the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Social Mobility.

5.3 The Commission formally noted its thanks to the APPG for tabling a House of Lords debate on social mobility. Secretariat were also thanked for supporting the APPG with their preparation for the debate. A suggestion was made to hold a series of 'marketplaces' in Parliament on our developing thinking.

5.4 The Chair advised that the Old Vic had become a Social Mobility Commission Ambassador organisation.

5.5 The Chair noted that the Secretary of State for Education had indicated that he would like to meet with all Commissioners later in the year.

5.6 A decision was taken to schedule an additional Commission board meeting on 22 April.

**Action: The Secretariat to schedule an additional Commission board meeting on 22 April 2020.**

## **6. Monitoring report (annual report)**

6.1 Commissioners were updated on progress on the Annual Monitoring report. The Commission noted that almost all government departments had responded to the questions asked although most had responded late.

6.2 The Commission asked that the following considerations were emphasised in the drafting and presentation of the report:

- several of the problems affecting the education system were a product of household poverty
- the forward plan of action for the Commission as a consequence of this monitoring exercise
- real-life examples of the importance of and challenges with making a social mobility journey

**Action: Secretariat would emphasise these points in the drafting and presentation of the report.**

## **Communications branding strategy and introduction**

6.3 The Commission welcomed new branding colleagues Laurie Castell-Gair and Gavin Macdonald to present their work on the development of the Commission's brand.

6.4 A discussion followed about the Commission's brand in relation to external communications. Commissioners agreed to develop a positive narrative in our

broad discussions with the public and acknowledged that messages to policy makers and ministers will have a different tone.

6.5 The Commission noted that its forthcoming research publications would be of interest to different audiences and that key communications metrics should be developed for each report.

**Action: The Secretariat would review the feedback from this session and a second session would be developed to further crystallise the core messages for different audiences.**

**Action: Laurie and Gavin would organise 1-1 sessions with Commissioners' interested in branding and messaging in advance of the next communications session.**