



**Flashback to early January, I was travelling to Newton Aycliffe for the first time, filled with nerves, excitement and anticipation ready for my placement journey with the Poverty Truth Commission Durham to start.**

On arrival I was greeted warmly by my placement supervisors and was introduced to the welcoming, friendly and approachable Community Commissioners, that I would later regard as one of the most inspiring groups of people I have ever met.

Many sessions passed, many lunches, many check-in questions, much planning and a whole lot of laughter. Each session bringing new discussions, new insights and a range of experiences and voices. These discussions and insights have really challenged and changed my ideas of what poverty is and have really showed me that there is not one set formula of what poverty looks like.

For the insights I have gathered, I must express my gratification to the Community Commissioners for allowing me to listen to their stories and experiences. I greatly admire the strength, determination and passion of the Community Commissioners and it really has been a pleasure to watch their growth in confidence and their discovery of their own voices to express the message they want to send about the reality of poverty.

With the building of confidence, nerves were also growing as the Poverty Truth Commission Durham Launch Event vastly approached, getting ever so closer at the conclusion of each session.

And then the day arrived, the day that we had all been waiting for, the Launch Event was finally upon us. We arrived early, decorated tables, put up displays, hung up posters and excitedly put our matching Poverty Truth Commission t-shirts on, ready for the event.

The event started with lunch and a brief introduction which was followed by the stories of the commissioners. Each story was spoken, an array of emotions present both within the voices of the Commissioners and the thoughts of the guests in the room. Emotions of frustration, sadness and shock. But most of all, hope. Hope for the future, hope for what can be achieved, hope for the impact that these stories can have. I think that is my biggest takeaway from my time with the Poverty Truth Commission, the importance of hope. The hope and positive mindset of the Community Commissioners, the Durham Community Action Team and the guests present at the Launch Event have been fundamental to this whole process and have really inspired me.

I suppose in summary, what I have learned from my placement with the Poverty Truth Commission Durham is an appreciation for the level of strength, determination, collaboration and hope needed to tackle poverty and enact change.

**Alana, PTC Work Experience Placement**