

**Tackling Poverty Today and Turning the Tide to
Create Lasting Change
A Strategy and Strategic Action Plan for
addressing Poverty in York
2025-2035**

A note on York Poverty Truth Commission's Organisational Standards

This strategy is informed by and embeds the York Poverty Truth Commission's Organisational Standards, which were approved by the Council Executive in March 2025. These standards are:

- We listen
- We are understanding
- We are respectful and friendly
- We are responsive, honest, and care about getting you the right support

A note on the role of councils

Local authorities, also known as councils, provide essential public services within a specific area. They are responsible for a wide range of functions, including social care, schools, housing, planning, environmental protection, waste management, and local infrastructure, like local roads and footpaths. They are not responsible for setting national policy and cannot change housing market conditions, the cost of products or essential services like energy or the welfare or benefits system.

Contents

A note on York Poverty Truth Commission's Organisational Standards	2
A note on the role of councils	2
Foreword by Cllrs Lomas and Webb	5
Introduction	6
Our Ambition	6
Our Strategic Objectives	6
Strategy Development and Consultation	7
Defining Poverty	8
This includes things like:	8
What Causes Poverty?	9
Setting the Context of the Strategy	11
Poverty in York in 2025	13
Strategic Framework	16
Our Strategic Action Plan	19
Strategic Objective One - Tackling poverty today	19
Strategic Objective Two - Preventing people from falling into poverty	19
Strategic Objective Three - Turning the tide to create long-lasting change	19
Strategic Delivery Plan	20
Strategic Objective One: Tackling Poverty Today	20
Strategic Objective Two: Preventing people from falling into poverty	22
Strategic Objective Three: Turning the tide to create long-lasting change	23
How Progress Will Be Monitored	25
Indicators	25

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Foreword by Cllrs Lomas and Webb

To be completed

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Introduction

From the outside, York looks like a beautiful, historic city, filled with culture and charm. Many people who visit York each year, drawn to its ancient walls and Minster, might think that poverty is something that happens elsewhere. But if you look closer, even within the city's famous walls, you'll see that poverty is a real issue for more and more people who live here.

The cost of living in York is very high, and, when coupled with national and international issues, this makes it harder for some people to afford what they need.

125 years ago, Seebohm Rowntree started the first big study of poverty in York. Fast forward to today and poverty is still visible in the city. Although, encouragingly, what is also still true is there remains a strong commitment in York to finding ways to help people in need and make the city more affordable for everyone. Many local organisations are working hard on this issue, and with their help, a new strategy to fight poverty has been created.

This new strategy is focused on the next ten years, but it won't be a one-time fix. Whilst some of the contextual factors in a decade's time will be the same as now, such as the built fabric of the city, the role of technology, and the shifting demographics of the city as the UK's population gets older, there are things we will not be able to predict. For instance, ten years ago, we couldn't have predicted things like the global pandemic, the rising cost of living, or the war in Ukraine. Because of this, the plan will be updated to deal with new challenges that emerge.

Our Ambition

Our ambition is to fight poverty in York and its impacts now and in the future. We want to improve the city, making it fairer and more affordable for everyone who lives here.

Our Strategic Objectives

It's not possible to completely end poverty with just one plan. There are many factors, at a national and international level as well as locally, that affect poverty, and we can't control all of them.

To help guide us, as we do what we can to reduce poverty across the city, this strategy has three main objectives:

1. **Tackling poverty today** – Helping people who are struggling right now.
2. **Preventing people from falling into poverty** – Making sure fewer people end up in poverty in the future.
3. **Creating long-lasting change** – Making York a more equal and affordable city for the long term.

These strategic objectives are designed to help people in York who are experiencing poverty but also create the longer-term conditions to make York more equitable and more affordable for all. They do not stand in isolation from one another. They are concurrent, happening at the same time, reinforcing and supporting work to tackle poverty in the city.

Strategy Development and Consultation

This strategy sets out the activity required to reduce poverty in the city for the next ten years. It replaces the Interim Financial Inclusion Strategy 2023-25.

It has been developed through discussion with lots of different people and organisations, led by the Council. It recognises the Council alone cannot tackle poverty. It requires all of us to work together. In this light, the strategy has been considered, developed, and amended through an extensive engagement process ensuring the voices of York's communities, its representatives, its groups, organisations and businesses are heard clearly in what York will do over the next ten years to tackle poverty.

It is important to recognise the strategy provides a framework for action. It is not the end of the conversation as the city, together, will continue to reflect on and amend activity based on the shifting landscape in which poverty exists.

IMAGES FROM CONSULTATION EVENTS/WORKSHOPS TO BE ADDED IN HERE

Defining Poverty

There isn't one single way to define poverty. People usually talk about two main types: relative income poverty and absolute income poverty.¹

- **Relative income poverty** refers to people living in households with an income that's below 60% of the average income for that year.
- **Absolute income poverty** refers to people living in households with an income that's below 60% of the average income from a specific year, usually 2010/11. This is then adjusted for inflation over time.

However, income alone doesn't fully account for poverty. Other factors, like wider living costs and individual needs, should also be considered.

This strategy uses the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's definition of poverty:

"When a person's resources (mainly their material resources) are not enough to meet their minimum needs, including social participation."

This includes things like:

- **Resources:** Usually, this means income, but it can also include things like savings, things you own (like a house or car), services

like healthcare or education, and support from family, friends, or community groups.

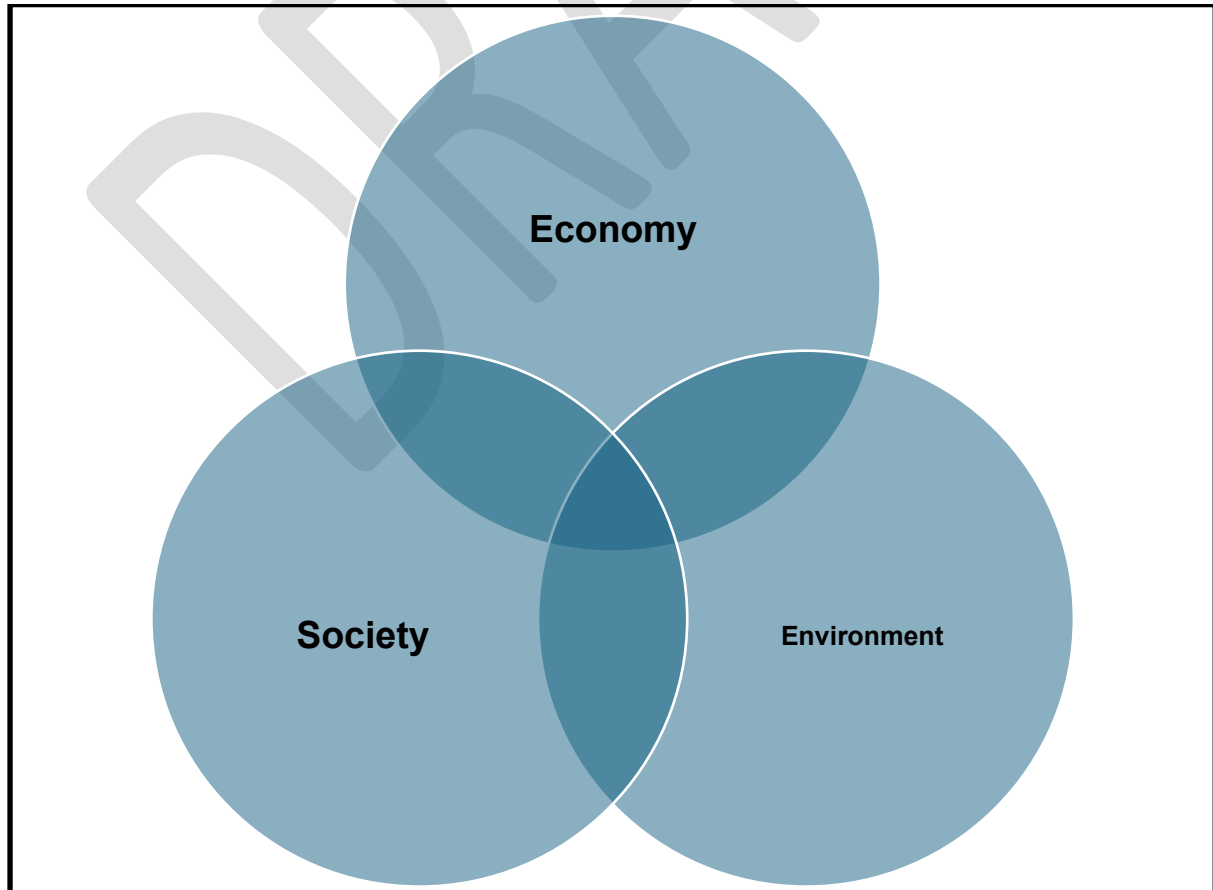
- Needs: These are essential items, like food, shelter, heating, clothing, and toiletries. But needs also include things like being able to join and be part of society, whether through hobbies, education, work, or training.

To help city partners keep working together to solve the main causes of poverty, it is recommended that everyone in the city use the same definition of poverty.

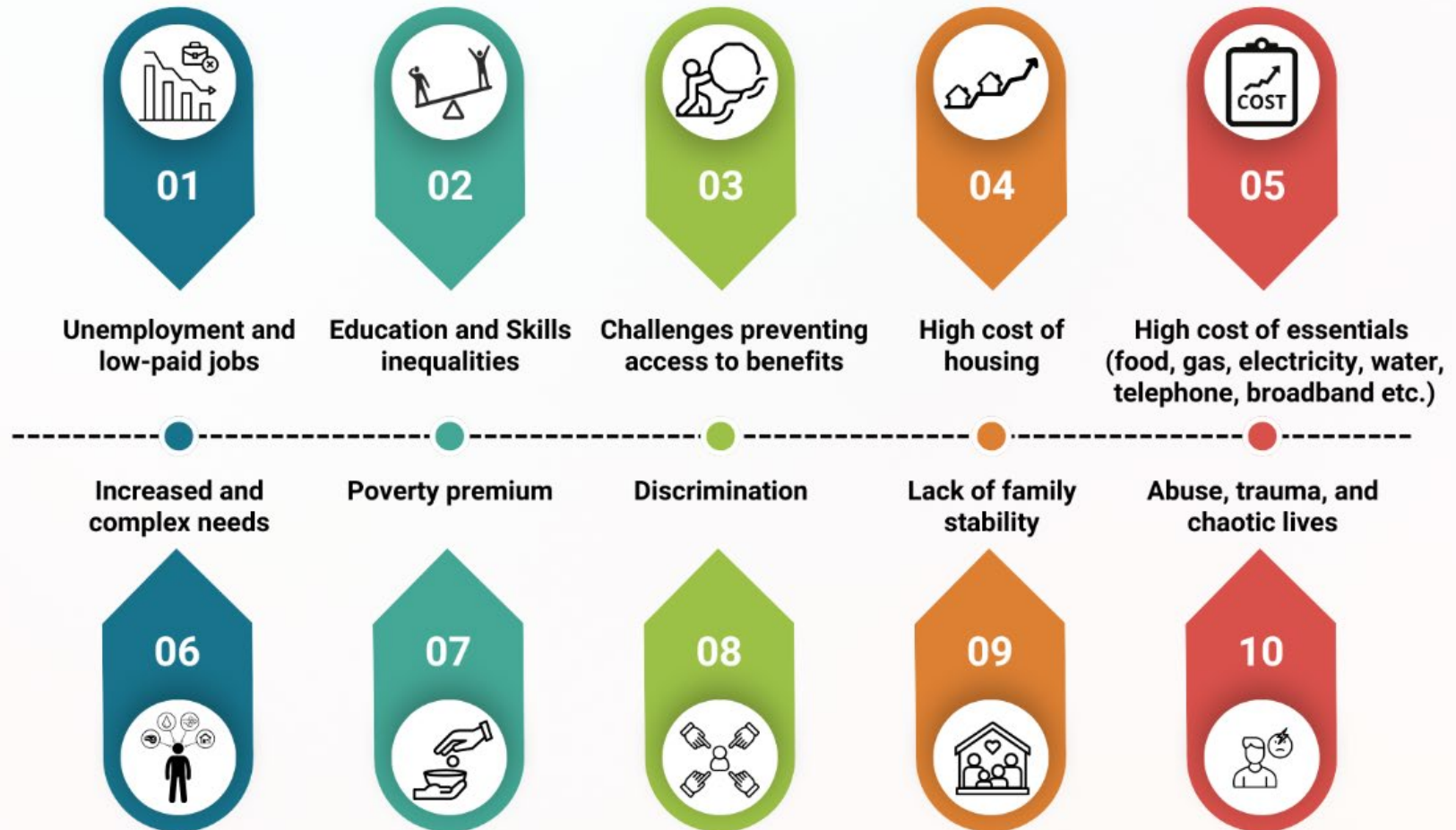
This way of thinking about poverty considers where people live, since living costs can be different in different places. For example, in York, living costs are higher than in many other places in the country, so, relatively, what counts as "poverty" here might be different from other places.

What Causes Poverty?

Poverty is a systemic issue. The economy, society, and the environment where people live act as overlapping drivers that create the conditions that cause poverty in people's lives. These causes, set out below, reduce the needs people have, or increase needs they cannot afford.



Causes of Poverty



Setting the Context of the Strategy

This strategy comes at a time when there are many long-term and emergent challenges at a global, national and local level. These exacerbate structural inequalities and hinder efforts to tackle the causes of poverty.

York does not stand in isolation. Global and national challenges, such as wars, pandemics and inflationary cost of living pressures impact on our ability to tackle localised issues. We have limited ways to offset these challenges given their scale and scope.

However, we also know there are unique issues to York that influence poverty levels in the city.

- We know that York has one of the highest costs of housing in the north of England with an affordability ratio of 8.5:1 (median house price to earnings ratio)
- The highest housing rental costs in the region – the average rent is nearly £300 per month more in York than the rest of the region (£1,006 v £722)
- Despite these housing costs, median gross weekly pay is only £40 above the regional average and below the national average
- There is a £180 wage gap between the 25 centile and median in York compared to £144 at a regional and £172 nationally meaning lower paid residents in York are comparatively worse off than their counterparts elsewhere in the country

Despite these challenges, there remains hope and determination to create a better future, with a strong commitment to address the root causes of poverty.

This commitment is also part of a bigger global effort. Ending poverty in all its forms is the first goal of the [United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals](#).

At a national level, the UK Government has made tackling child poverty a priority. Across the country, local authorities are developing plans to reduce poverty, working together to find the best ways to make a difference in their communities.

In our region, the Mayor for York and North Yorkshire wants to create "healthy and thriving communities" by focusing on economic growth, better skills, and affordable housing.

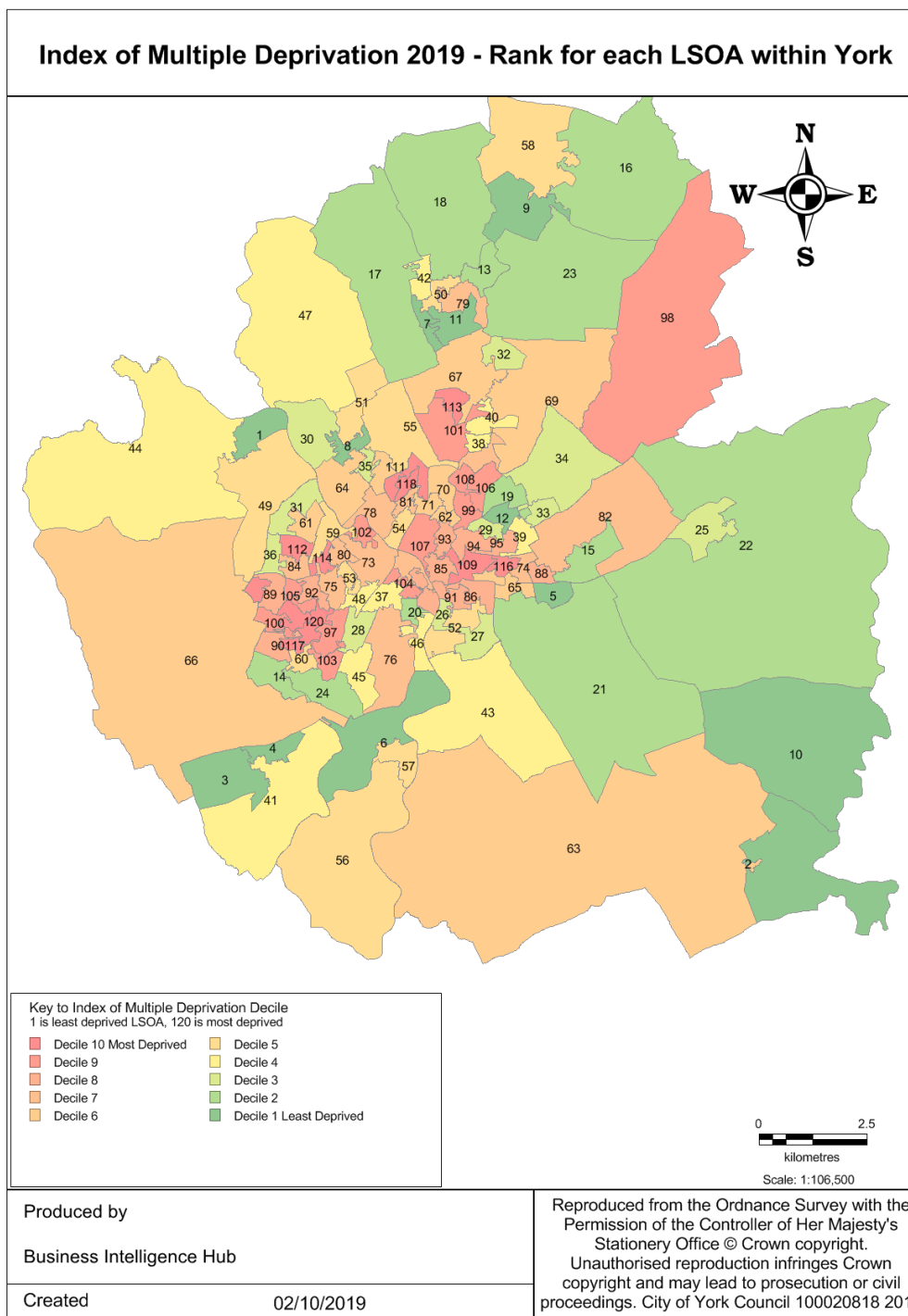
In this context, developing a plan to reduce poverty in York is both important and timely.

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Poverty in York in 2025

Poverty, and its proxy deprivation, exists in all parts of York although it is more prevalent in some areas than others.

The below map indicates indices of multiple deprivation in the city. This considers seven measures of deprivation – income, employment, education, health, crime, barriers to housing services, and the living environment. The darker the red the more deprived the ward, the darker the green the less deprived the ward.



The variable impact of poverty in the city is further reinforced by life expectancy variation for men with a 10-year difference in life expectancy between the poorest and richest wards in the city (6.71 for women).

Whilst we cannot know the exact number of people living in poverty in York, through data insight provided by Policy in Practice we are able to provide an indicative poverty rate. This considers a percentage of households below a selected income threshold, out all households in receipt of benefits.

The data (utilising information from national sources) in the table below is based on Relative Resources Gap (a measure used to assess poverty by considering not just income but also other resources as defined on page 8 of this strategy).

Relative poverty is where an individual or household lack the resources to maintain a standard of living that is considered the norm of their society.

Deep poverty is where a household's income is significantly below the median household income, often defined as below 50% of the median.

Relative Resources Gap by ward in York			
	As of March 2025,		
	At risk of poverty	In relative poverty	In deep poverty
All Wards	21.2% (1,765)	39.84% (2,811)	4% (282)
Acomb	26.14% (80)	36.6% (112)	6.21% (19)
Bishopthorpe	25% (26)	34.62% (36)	0.96% (1)
Clifton	18.2% (115)	47.94% (303)	5.38% (34)
Copmanthorpe	22.06% (15)	39.71% (27)	4.41% (3)
Dringhouses & Woodthorpe	22.4% (97)	39.49% (171)	4.62% (20)
Fishergate	20.99% (68)	36.73% (119)	1.23% (4)
Fulford & Heslington	28.31% (47)	39.76% (66)	1.81% (3)
Guildhall	21.8% (177)	47.29% (384)	3.57% (29)
Haxby & Wiggington	18.91% (52)	33.09% (91)	2.55% (7)
Heworth	19.83% (141)	48.24% (343)	5.77% (41)

Heworth Without	15.87% (10)	41.27% (26)	3.17% (2)
Holgate	21.58% (115)	51.41% (274)	4.5% (24)
Hull Road	22.14% (85)	50.52% (194)	4.43% (17)
Huntington & New Earswick	19.43% (136)	34.57% (242)	2% (14)
Micklegate	24.52% (140)	45.36% (259)	4.03% (23)
Osballdwick & Derwent	17.84% (43)	42.32% (102)	2.9% (7)
Rawcliffe & Clifton Without	21.84% (69)	38.61% (122)	6.01% (19)
Rural West	24.72% (44)	46.07% (82)	1.12% (2)
Strensall	21.02% (37)	37.5% (66)	3.41% (6)
Westfield	19.61% (232)	52.16% (617)	4.65% (55)
Wheldrake	25.71% (18)	42.86% (30)	2.86% (2)

The table demonstrates that poverty is apparent across York but is more concentrated in certain wards. Westfield has the highest percentage of individuals in relative and deep poverty (nearly 57%) with Holgate and Hull Road Wards experiencing a similar level. However, Fulford and Heslington has the highest percentage of residents on the cusp of poverty ahead of Acomb, Wheldrake and Bishopthorpe.

We know that poverty is more evident for some groups of people than others. Looking at the same data, we know that:

- Those in receipt of universal credit are more likely to be in poverty than those who are not
- Working age people are much more likely to be in poverty than pensioners
- Those with in receipt of disability allowances are more likely to experience poverty
- Carers and lone parents are more likely to be in poverty
- Households with at least one child eligible for free school meals are likely to be in poverty and those with young children are the most likely to be in poverty

However, data only tells us so much about poverty and its impact on individuals and families.

Strategic Framework

This strategy does not sit in isolation.

In 2022, local partners came together to set a 10-year vision to make York a “vibrant, prosperous, welcoming, and sustainable city, where everyone can share and take pride in its success.” This vision was broken down into five elements: health and wellbeing, education and skills, economic growth, transport, and sustainability.

Sitting behind this were 10-year strategies focused on climate change, York’s economy, and health and wellbeing. This has been reinforced by the development of a Movement and Place Plan that will lead to sustainable, active, affordable transport systems in the city.

The Council Plan (2023-27) and partner strategies are also seen through the prism of the 2032 vision. Indeed, this framework has been used to underline the ambitions of the city, not least in the work to inform York’s growth in response to the opportunities set out within the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority (such as the Local Growth Plan) but also at a national level with government.

In December 2024 the Council’s Executive approved Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy for 2024-29. The Strategy will guide work in this area over the next five years and will seek to enlist partners, stakeholders and citizens in a plan to make homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring. The Strategy builds on existing successes and partnerships, offering pathways to suitable housing that can be sustained with high quality, person-centred support. This sits alongside Council priorities around building 100% affordable homes on council land, and insulating thousands of homes to combat cost of living impacts.

York 2032 provides a framework to identify opportunities to tackle poverty in the city – especially given the connection between the drivers of poverty (economy, environment, society) as well as take advantage of the opportunities presented by the Combined Authority and elsewhere.

York 2032 Strategy and Policy Framework

Our vision

York will be a vibrant, prosperous, welcoming and sustainable city, where everyone can share and take pride in its success.

A city where history meets the future.

Priorities and Goals

Health and Wellbeing	Education and Skills	Economic Growth	Transport	Sustainability
All York residents (young, old and future residents) will enjoy happier, healthier, longer lives, in homes that meet their needs, able to actively participate in their communities, with access to the right support at the right time.	All ages will have access to learning throughout their lives to equip them with the skills to succeed commercially, socially, locally and nationally.	York's economy will be vibrant and inclusive, with businesses supported to grow and prosper and talent nurtured, retained and supported. Our economy will be developed to be well balanced with a mix of different sectors providing opportunities for young and old.	York's transport networks will be inclusive and sustainable, connecting neighbourhoods and communities.	York will be carbon neutral and contribute to the regional ambition to be carbon negative, with iconic green spaces to enjoy today and the environment protected for future generations to enjoy.

Movement and Place Plan 2023–2040

Health and Wellbeing Strategy
2022–2032

Economic Growth Strategy
2022–2032

Climate Change Strategy
2022–2032

THE POLICY FRAMEWORK

Policies set the context. Policies typically include SMART objectives and/or targets. The Council's Executive approves council policy and related budget, with city partner's own governance arrangements responding to their own strategies and policies. Council Policies are called Plans, for example the Local Plan, the Local Transport Plan, the Council Plan, etc.

ACTION PLANS

Action plans set out the city partner's actions to deliver the vision and goals in the 10-year Plan and related 10-year strategies. City Partners own actions plans will respond (in part) to the priorities.

At the same time, whilst recognising our ability to influence national and global challenges are limited, the strategy will adapt and evolve to global and national policy such as the emergent UK Child Poverty Strategy and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

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Our Strategic Action Plan

Poverty hurts people and the whole community. It makes it harder for people to stay healthy, go to school or work, and live a good life which in turn can cause problems in society.

We know poverty affects some groups of people more than others. Because of this, not everything in our plan will help everyone in the same way. Some of our actions are focused on helping those who are most in need although poverty can and does have an impact across all of society.

The groups most affected by poverty include children, families (particularly those with multiple children), single-parent families, and people who have unstable incomes because of unemployment or low wages. Disabled people, those living in rented homes, and some minority ethnic groups also often face higher rates of poverty.

Our Strategic Objectives are designed to bring results both in the short term and in the long term. These objectives should not be seen in isolation; they build on each other and happen at the same time. They aim to solve immediate problems while also setting up solutions for the future.

Each strategic objective looks at the causes of poverty. By addressing these causes, we hope to find opportunities to tackle the long-term issues that lead to poverty.

Strategic Objective One - Tackling poverty today

Focuses on the actions being taken to help people who are currently living in poverty or are at risk of falling into it.

Strategic Objective Two - Preventing people from falling into poverty

Focuses on actions that can help lift people out of poverty and stop more people from falling into it.

Strategic Objective Three - Turning the tide to create long-lasting change

Making long-term changes to create a fairer and more affordable York for everyone.

Strategic Delivery Plan

Strategic Objective One: Tackling Poverty Today

We are currently working on different actions to help people who live in poverty or are close to falling into it.

Challenge	Example of what we will do
Challenges preventing access to benefits	Working with partners across York to ensure people have access to the right help and support so they can maximise their income.
Education and skills inequalities	Supporting York's children to get the best start in life, creating a strong sense of belonging through equality and equity in education and community settings. Creating the conditions for all of York's residents to learn new skills, opening up employment opportunities.
Unemployment and low-paid jobs	Championing approaches that enshrine good, fair working conditions for all of York's communities, for example promoting the Good Business Charter and real living wage. Making access to work easier and more affordable through improved, sustainable public transport.
High cost of housing	Reducing energy costs of current social housing through retrofitting properties, whilst working with private landlords to improve energy efficiency in the private rental market. Providing multidisciplinary support for those in need of warm, supportive environment. Building affordable housing on council land.

High Cost of Essential Goods	Signposting people to help and support when in need, such as food banks and warm places, and providing access to modern day essentials such as digital white goods.
Increased and complex needs	Establishing, maintaining and enhancing programmes of support to improve health and social wellbeing made worse as a result of poverty and poor wellbeing.
Poverty premium	Supporting a "cash first" approach, offering direct payments to individuals facing hardship to give them autonomy and control over how to meet their needs. Signposting sustainable, affordable solutions to help people access safe finance and affordable goods.
Discrimination	Acknowledging and addressing the challenges facing some members of our community to access support and overcoming adversity.
Lack of family stability	Providing early help for families in need.
Abuse, trauma and chaotic lives	Taking a trauma informed approach in recognition of the impacts of abuse and chaotic lives. Engaging with our carer community to ensure they have the help and support they need.

Strategic Objective Two: Preventing people from falling into poverty

We're working to help people who are struggling with money now, and we're also trying to fix the bigger problems that cause poverty, so fewer people end up in difficult situations.

Challenge	Example of what we'll do
Education and skills inequalities	Deliver financial education programmes so residents of all ages can learn about financial management techniques.
Unemployment and low paid jobs	Support people who aren't employed into or back into the workforce, making sure job training matches what local jobs need, and ensuring consideration is given to unique characteristics.
High cost of housing	Build affordable housing that meets environmental needs and reduces bills for residents and work with the private rental sector to make rented homes more affordable, of better quality and more energy efficient.
High cost of essential goods	Reduce the need for expensive personal vehicles to get to work or education through providing more sustainable, affordable public transport and cycle and walking paths.
Increased and complex needs	Providing support to enable the transition into the workplace for young people with Special Educational Needs.
Poverty premium	Inspire all young people with cultural and creative opportunities through the introduction of a cultural passports programme.

Strategic Objective Three: Turning the tide to create long-lasting change

This part of our plan looks at big changes that need to happen over time to really make a difference in ending poverty. Some things are starting now but will take time to show results, while others are long-term ideas to help York and its people in the future.

Challenge	Examples of what we'll do
Challenges preventing access to benefits	Making sure York's voice is heard by working with the Government and others to understand the impact of national policy on York residents.
Education and skills inequalities	Work with local, regional and national partners to reduce long-term unemployment in the city and create space for people to learn new skills.
Unemployment and low-paid jobs	Implement a social value outcome framework to support organisations to increase community wealth by redirecting procurement and purchasing into the city. Help social enterprises grow (businesses that help people and communities). Create sustainable, affordable transport systems into York and within the wider region. Create more jobs, including part-time or flexible hours, that meet the needs of residents.
High cost of housing	Deliver The Local Plan to build more affordable housing across York and utilise supplementary planning documents to make places and spaces multi-functional building and enhancing our communities. Identify and address procedural and policy drivers to address rental price issues in York.

	Use the Community Infrastructure Levy to provide community infrastructure (like health, or parks and play areas) that is free and accessible to all.
High cost of essential goods	<p>Create local renewable energy solutions to lower household bills.</p> <p>Support sharing, repairing and reusing of goods and tools in the community (this is called the circular economy).</p>
Increased and complex needs	<p>Work with partners to embed an early intervention and prevention approach to reduce longer-term health issues in the city.</p> <p>Create the conditions for good health by making it easier to be physically active and travel actively, reducing air pollution, and making healthier food more affordable and accessible</p> <p>Protect residents from the commercial determinants of ill health and poverty, for instance high-cost loan products, poor landlord practice, and the advertising and marketing of unhealthy commodities e.g. gambling, alcohol and unhealthy food</p>

How Progress Will Be Monitored

This strategy is shared and supported by different groups and organisations in York. The City of York Council has endorsed it on behalf of the city.

The Financial Inclusion Steering Group will lead monitoring the strategy's progress. They will check if the actions are being done and if things are improving, using the indicators listed below and considering the real-world application of this strategy's approach.

We will develop an Annual Action Plan with the Financial Inclusion Steering Group, and annually review of indicators, approved by Executive Member Decision Session.

The Council, through its regular reporting mechanisms, will also review the strategy to make sure it's working and fit for purpose.

Indicators

We'll keep track of how poverty in York is changing by looking at the below performance indicators

In addition, the Financial Steering Group will monitor progress against the actions we take, looking at eligibility and engagement in the different programmes to support people.

We will learn from the lived experience of people experiencing poverty, or at risk of poverty to understand how this changes over time.

Slope index of inequality in life expectancy at birth - Female - (Three-year period)
Slope index of inequality in life expectancy at birth - Male - (Three-year period)
%pt gap between FSM and non-FSM pupils at 15, who attain a Level 3 qualification by the age of 19 - (Snapshot)
%pt gap between FSM and non-FSM pupils at 15, who attain a Level 2 qualification by the age of 19 - (Snapshot)
% of young people who attain a Level 3 qualification by the age of 19 - FSM pupils - (Snapshot)
% of young people who attain a Level 2 qualification by the age of 19 - FSM pupils - (Snapshot)

% of children eligible for FSM who have achieved a Good Level of Development (GLD) at Foundation Stage - (Snapshot)
%pt gap between FSM and non-FSM pupils who have achieved a Good Level of Development (GLD) at Foundation Stage - (Snapshot)
% of households in fuel Poverty - low-income low energy efficiency (LILEE)
JSA and UC (Out of Work) % of working age population (16 - 64)
Indices of Multiple Deprivation