

Meeting:	Executive
Meeting date:	15 July 2025
Report of:	Director of Public Health
Portfolio of:	Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care

Decision Report: Strengthening York's Support for Drug and Alcohol Recovery

Subject of Report

1. Drugs and alcohol continue to present major issues for health and wellbeing in York. They lead to early illness and death, and in fact are the two leading causes of death in York for those between the ages of 15 and 49. They give rise to thousands of hospital admissions a year, worsen or lead to the onset of mental health conditions, and precipitate a large range of consequent physical health issues.
2. They also present a city issue, and interact considerably with significant issues around housing, criminal justice, community cohesion, employment and safety, holding people back from living thriving and empowered lives.
3. Nationally, the approach to supporting people with drug and alcohol issues has developed significantly over the last decades, from a sole emphasis on treatment and clinical services, such as substitution therapy, to a much greater focus on recovery.
4. This report focuses on the next steps needed to strength York's community recovery model, in line with council plan aspirations, and recommends to Executive a number of actions the council can take to further these aims and improve the lives of people affected by addictions in our city.

Benefits and Challenges

5. The benefits of a strengthened recovery system in York are numerous, including improved health for residents, employability outcomes, improved community cohesion, reduced health and care services use.
6. In terms of the decisions Executive are presented with in this paper, there are several direct benefits. The establishment of a Community Recovery Hub at Wellington row will utilise an external grant to leverage in community resources into a CYC building, providing a vibrant recovery-oriented facility in the heart of the city. The endorsement of the Inclusive Recovery Cities initiative will show strong council commitment to this movement to make recovery accessible and sustainable for more people and send a strong signal that people in recovery in our city have civic backing right behind them on their journey.
7. The challenge is, perhaps, that building and sustaining a strong recovery community locally will not always happen in a stepwise fashion, may encounter setbacks and 'bumps along the road' and requires the right conditions to be in place over the long term. The council has a role to play – although not the only or even the most prominent role, which belongs to the community themselves – in making this happen, and needs to show sustained commitment to this agenda, including anti-stigma and visible recovery commitments, in its future work.

Policy Basis for Decision

8. The Council Plan 2023-2027 has a commitment to 'Support more people on their journey of recovery from addiction, including through smoking cessation services and our recovery-based drug and alcohol model.'

Financial Strategy Implications

9. There are no direct financial implications involved in endorsing the Inclusive Recovery Cities initiative. The council may on occasion be asked to contribute, along with partners, to events or meetings relating to the initiative, most of which will be held at no cost or cost-in-kind from supporting organisations. Where small amounts

are required from the council to host e.g. a public event, this resource will come from the Public Health grant.

10. The financial resources which cover the lease and utilities for the Community Recovery Hub at Wellington Row come from existing grant money CYC holds, originating from a Public Health England grant given to CYC which has until recently been held by the former treatment provider (Changing Lives). No new CYC resource is needed to contract for this provision over the next 3 years, however after that point the project will need to sustain itself through other forms of grant / community funding, a situation which is in line with the journey described below where council provides strong up-front resource for this project initially, but moves into a supportive partner role towards the end of the contract term.

Recommendation and Reasons

11. Executive are asked to:

Note the decision taken by the Director of Public Health through officer delegation to award a contract to York in Recovery CIC of the value £202,000 to lease and manage the Community Recovery Hub for a period of 3 years

Reason: to enable the provision of a dedicated recovery space in the city

Express the council's commitment to the Inclusive Recovery Cities approach and York's Inclusive Recovery City Vision statement, and delegate to the Director of Public Health and Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care to explore and monitor any areas for improvement within council business and formally sign the Inclusive Recovery City Vision Statement for York on behalf of the council.

Reason: to ensure the council leads by example in its approach to promoting recovery and making it easy for people with substance use disorders to seek help, for example in communications and people management policy and practices, and clear civic support is given to the Inclusive Recovery City approach in York

Background

12. From poor-quality sleep to high blood pressure, anxiety and cancer, the wide-ranging impacts of alcohol affect so many of us. This is a matter of life and death too; people are dying before their time because of harms related to alcohol or other substances.
13. Although many of the levers around reducing substance-related harm are around higher standards for how alcohol is promoted and sold, curbing the supply of illicit drugs, and empowering the next generation with resilience / critical life skills and a sense of belonging in society, it's also important to ensure people with substance use disorders are supported to access quality treatment. This includes challenging stigma around drug and alcohol problems, making recovery from substance use disorders visible in the city and facilitating peer support to sustain ongoing recovery.
14. This report outlines key next steps to strength York's support for recovery from substance use disorders, in line with council plan aspirations, and recommends to Executive a number of actions the council can take to further these aims and improve the lives of people in our city.
15. The principle behind recovery is that a human's journey out of addiction is much more likely to be successful if they are part of a strong recovery community, which emphasises connection, a new recovery-based social life and as well as empowerment.
16. As Professor David Best (Leeds Trinity University) puts it:

This process is unique to every individual, but in general it could be regarded as a non-linear, gradual, multidimensional process that involves growth in connectedness, hope, positive identity, meaning and empowerment. Recovery does however not happen in a vacuum. Instead, it should be considered as a social process of community integration.¹

¹ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/16066359.2018.1520223#abstract>

17. In York these community connections have been going for many years, with pop-up cafes, meetings, activities, support and social events happening most days of the week. Organisations including SMART UK, Alcoholic Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Cocaine Anonymous, York in Recovery, Lived Insights, as well as charities such as Chocolate & Co and the treatment providers Change Grow Live and Emerging Futures, facilitate a vibrant recovery community in York involving many thousands of people.
18. It is often said that 'few people can walk the recovery journey alone', and this is why investing in strong supportive structures a well-functioning recovery system are so crucial.
19. It is clear this approach has huge benefits for the individual, but it also has wider benefits to society. Estimates for the social and economic costs of alcohol related harm amount to £21.5bn, while harm from illicit drug use costs £10.7bn. These include costs associated with deaths, the NHS, crime and, in the case of alcohol, lost productivity. In York alone, it is estimated that alcohol's economic burden on society is at least £91.7m, including NSH costs of £18.2m, Crime and Disorder costs of £45.9m, wider economy costs of £20.1m, and social services costs of £7.5m

Inclusive Recovery Cities

20. The Inclusive Recovery Cities movement is an international initiative championed by Professor David Best. It has been adopted by cities in many different parts of the world, including in Europe, North America, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Closer to home, Middlesbrough became the first official Inclusive Recovery City in 2024.
21. An Inclusive Recovery City is a place that:
 - Makes recovery visible, giving hope to those currently experiencing substance use problems and providing ongoing support to those who are in recovery from substance use disorders
 - Challenges the stigma which can stop people coming forward for help, contributing to further harm, including as serious as death, for those with substance use disorders

- Champions multiple pathways to recovery from substance use disorders
- Recognises that through doing this, the whole city will benefit.

22. Professor David Best, the Founder of the international Inclusive Recovery Cities movement, introduces the need to work as a city to make recovery visible as follows:

Every town or city high street contains messages about 2-4-1 drinks offers or e-cigarette products that play a proactive and visible role in the development of addictive behaviours and illnesses. The in-built stigma surrounding addictions causes isolation and often a loss of jobs and homes. But when somebody succumbs to the harms we perpetuate, far too often there is a tendency to close our eyes and hope the 'problem' goes away. Inevitably, unless we make recovery visible, the problem will just get bigger and bigger. Visible recovery creates a ripple effect, collective efficacy and trust and engagement between citizens that enable communities to thrive from their roots.²

23. Work towards becoming an Inclusive Recovery City requires “both a ‘top-down’ and a ‘bottom-up’ process, where strategic engagement combines with grass roots activity and energy to coordinate engagement and impact at a city level”. Key aspects include:

- Creation of a local Inclusive Recovery City steering group and mission/vision statement
- High-level understanding and commitment to the local IRC Vision Statement (see Annexe A, ‘A vision for York as an Inclusive Recovery City’)
- An audit of existing assets and resources that IRC movement can build on
- Development of an activity plan (at least 4 events per year) and a communications plan
- Development of a monitoring and evaluation plan to review progress and inform ongoing changes – Initial focus on activities but the longer-term outcomes to assess include visibility and

² <https://www.citymonitor.ai/analysis/inclusive-recovery-city/?cf-view&cf-closed>

awareness of the recovery community, stigma and social distance, connectedness within the recovery community and into the wider community.

- Involvement at a national level in recovery movements for change.
24. However, the process of becoming an Inclusive Recovery City is not one-size-fits-all process, and crucially, it is not an 'accolade' the council signs up for or achieves. It relates to the whole community, and members are today being asked to commit to the approach as one partner amongst many.
 25. On the 20th of June 2024, the York Drug and Alcohol Partnership Board discussed and endorsed the proposal brought forward by our local Lived Experience Recovery Organisation ('LERO'), York in Recovery, that as a city we should work towards the ethos and practical outworking of being an Inclusive Recovery City.
 26. A small steering group led by York in Recovery and City of York Council Public Health have agreed a local 'vision statement' to define and guide York's progress to being an Inclusive Recovery City (Annexe A)
 27. Practically, members are being asked to:
 - a) Approve commitment to the local statement
 - b) Delegate the Director of Public Health and Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care to explore and monitor any areas for improvement within council business, such as such as the adoption of planned guidance on communications relating to alcohol and drugs
 - c) Delegate to the Director of Public Health and Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care to sign the local Inclusive Recovery City statement on behalf of the council, together with many other partners, in a future signing event likely to happen in 2026.

Establishment of the York Community Recovery Hub

28. The journey to becoming an Inclusive Recovery City involves many factors, including culture, policy, people, services and events, but it also will include the recently opened York Community Recovery Hub on Wellington Row. This is a key physical destination we are hoping for people in York who use substances will start to call 'home' on their journey into long term recovery from addiction.

29. CYC holds a historic grant given to the council by the (now abolished) Public Health England in order to bring a building into use for the purposes of recovery activity in York. This funding was granted out to the previous provider of drug and alcohol services in the city and returned to CYC at the end of that provider's contract for the drug and alcohol treatment service in 2024.
30. Since 2023, the public health team have been actively working with a number of recovery organisations in the city to finally bring this physical provision of services into being, under the vision of a 'Community Recovery Hub'.
31. This 'hub' has been birthed out of two coproduction events held in May 2023 and September 2024, attended by a large number of partners and people with lived experience. The recovery community have also hosted continuous discussions which have shaped the plans across the past few years.
32. Whilst there have been and continue to be various activities taking place around recovery in the city they have never had a home to develop and grow. A pilot of how a Community Recovery Hub could work took place 18 months ago, and the opportunity has now come to use the remaining grant monies for a longer-term lease, at The Hub, Wellington Row. This building is a CYC asset on our commercial property list.
33. To ensure the recovery community is at the heart of the activity intended to run from this building – rather than it being a site for the delivery of council services – the Community Recovery Hub project needs a partner to take the lease for the building, in agreement with CYC Property Services, and manage a schedule of activities and operations from the building, in line with an agreed project specification.
34. To this end, the council's public health team have worked with Property Services, Procurement and Legal colleagues and are following the council's own Contract Procedure Rules (as dated Nov.2023) which include provisions for the award grants through a competitive grants process unless it isn't Best Value to do so, and therefore a waiver form request of CPR 4.5 has been submitted to request approval to issue grant funding worth £202,000 to the lived experience organisation York in Recovery, following a market engagement exercise demonstrating them as the only interested

party in delivering such a project, and following a due diligence process.

35. This Grant Award will cover the lease of the building as well as utilities, will last for an initial 3 years, and will be awarded under a waiver of Contract Procedure Rule 4.5. The request to waive CPR 4.5. is pursuant to CPR 26 – Waivers and Exemptions where the circumstances are certified by the Monitoring Officer and Head of Procurement as meeting the following criteria:

CPR 26.2.10 where officers from Finance, Commercial Procurement and/or Legal are satisfied that there is a significant risk to the statutory functions of the Council, or to its governance, audit or finances, a significant safeguarding risk, or a significant risk of failure in the case of an immediate statutory inspection, if the Supplier is not engaged (such confirmation in all cases to be confirmed in writing by the relevant Chief Officer).

36. This Grant Award falls under the value which can be approved under delegated officer decision making, so members are asked to Note the decision taken by the Director of Public Health through officer delegation to award a contract to York in Recovery CIC of the value £202,000 to lease and manage the Community Recovery Hub for a period of 3 years.

Consultation Analysis

37. The recommendation to express the council's commitment to the Inclusive Recovery Cities approach and York's Inclusive Recovery City Vision statement is based on work led by the recovery community locally, and members of the community brought the proposal to the York Drug and Alcohol Partnership for statutory partners to consider. Partners, in the main part those with lived experience, have formed a steering group to progress the plans.
38. The Community Recovery Hub concept was coproduced through two whole-system workshops, and is now led by a coordination group involving representatives with lived experience from a number of recovery organisations in York.
39. There has been engagement with the local community in the Micklegate ward and surrounding areas where the Community Recovery Hub will be sited, through individual meetings, invitations

to two open days, and other communications on plans. Local businesses have kindly assisted with the decoration of the hub.

Organisational Impact and Implications

- ***Financial***

The Full budget envelope of £202,000 is available from the Recovery Fund reserve and as does not include any inflationary measures for the 3 years and therefore is consider affordable.

- ***Human Resources (HR)***

There are no direct Human Resources Implications of this report.

- ***Legal***

With regards to the Grant Award for the Community Recovery Hub at Wellington Row, Legal Services must carry out a full assessment of the proposed grant funding arrangement before any agreements are entered into with York In Recovery, to ensure compliance with the Subsidy Control Act 2022, as well as Rules 5(f) and 5(g) the Council's Financial Regulations under Appendix 10a of the Council's Constitution (the "**Council's Financial Regs**") and Rules 4 and 26.2.10 of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules under Appendix 11 of the Council's Constitution (the "**Council's CPRs**")]

In addition to the above, Legal Services must be consulted with to advise upon the drafting of the grant funding agreement, and the propose lease at the building, the grant funding agreement and building lease must be drafted and concluded with input from Legal Services to ensure compliance with the Council's CPRs, the Councils Financial Regs, and the Subsidy Control Act 2022 and to ensure that any rules or conditions originally imposed by Public Health England on the use of this funding are adhered to. Any grant funding agreement and lease entered into will have no procurement law implications under the Council's CPRs and (where applicable) the Procurement Act 2023. However, the Council cannot elect to award a Grant where the sole purpose for doing so would be to avoid conducting a competitive tender process in accordance with the Council's CPRs and (where

applicable) the Procurement Act 2023. Further advice must be sought from Legal Service where necessary.

- ***Procurement***

The current legislation for public sector procurement “Procurement Act 2023” doesn’t include any specific provisions relating to the award of Grants but the Act does emphasise transparency, fairness, and value for money in procurement processes, applicable to both contracts and grants.

This Strengthening York’s Support for Drug and Alcohol Recovery decision report confirms that a market engagement event was previously held where the provider York in Recovery were identified as the only suitable provider and was also following a due diligence process. This evidenced that the suitable market of providers was invited and engaged and there was only one provider deemed suitable for the award of this Grant of £202,000 to lease and manage the Community Recovery Hub for a period of 3 years. Therefore, the requirements of the Procurement Act 2023 on transparency, fairness, and value for money applicable to grants have been complied with and can be justified by the market engagement and compliance with the council’s rules and governance of decisions to obtain the necessary approvals to direct award this grant to York in Recovery.

Therefore, this direct Grant Award of £202,000 to York in Recovery will cover the grant funding agreement and the lease of the building as well as utilities, will last for an initial 3 years, and will be awarded under a waiver of Contract Procedure Rule 4.5. The request to waive CPR 4.5. is pursuant to CPR 26 – Waivers and Exemptions where the circumstances are certified by the Monitoring Officer and Head of Procurement as meeting the following criteria:

CPR 26.2.10 “where officers from Finance, Commercial Procurement and/or Legal are satisfied that there is a significant risk to the statutory functions of the Council, or to its governance, audit or finances, a significant safeguarding risk, or a significant risk of failure in the case of an immediate statutory inspection, if the Supplier is not engaged (such confirmation in all cases to be confirmed in writing by the relevant Chief Officer)”

This contract falls under the value which can be approved under delegated officer decision making.

- ***Health and Wellbeing***

The establishment of a Community Recovery Hub, and the endorsement of the Inclusive Recovery Cities approach, is in line with the health and Wellbeing Strategy and will lead to improved health and reduction in health inequalities for some of the city's most vulnerable residents.

- ***Environment and Climate action***

The Climate Change team within City of York Council will support the ongoing decarbonisation of council buildings, including the new Community Recovery Hub.

- ***Affordability***

Supporting recovery from drug and alcohol addiction has a positive effect on financial inclusion and support in the city.

- ***Equalities and Human Rights***

An EIA for this work is included at Annex B.

- ***Data Protection and Privacy***

The data protection impact assessment (DPIAs) screening questions were completed for the recommendations and options in this report and as there will be no personal, special categories or criminal offence data being processed, there is no requirement to complete a DPIA.

- ***Communications***

The council's communications team support public health with a wide range of projects, and will partner with community recovery organisations on work to communicate the vision of inclusive recovery cities and the ongoing resource of the Community Recovery Hub

- ***Economy***

Recovery work offer positive opportunities for getting people into volunteering and other employment opportunities, and will benefit the economy in this way.

Risks and Mitigations

40. The progress noted in this report towards building an integrated recovery-oriented system in York offers the city an opportunity to reduce the risk and harms of addiction. In giving council support to the provision of a physical building for recovery activities, and in endorsing the Inclusive Recovery Cities approach, members would be positively impacting and mitigating these risks.
41. There are a number of risks associated with the leasing of any property, which are mitigated through close working with the leaseholder, good work to build up community relations and positive perceptions / anti-stigma work of the venture, and the contractual terms which will cover the agreement with the provider.

Wards Impacted

42. This report covers all wards in York. The Community Recovery Hub is sited within Micklegate ward, and the paper details the consultation and engagement process with local residents and businesses.

Contact details

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Annexes

Annex A – IRC Vision Statement

Annex B – Equalities Impact Assessment