

JSNA Poverty Deep Dive Update

Summary of progress against findings and feedback arising from the JSNA Poverty deep dive work

Significant progress has been made against a number of the key areas highlighted in the JSNA Poverty work and the feedback received at the engagement event.

Since the work was completed, the council has gone through a change of administration which has inevitably meant some change in focus. However, Financial Inclusion has been expressed as a key policy area of the new administration. The Council Plan, for example, commits City of York Council to promoting financial inclusion through supporting the Living Wage, voluntary organisations and developing financial inclusion work with measurable outcomes. Senior Councillors are now attending the Financial Inclusion Steering Group (FISG). Work is continuing to be progressed on ensuring existing community resources are maximised to provide resources for those experiencing poverty, for example through the redevelopment of community services in Tang Hall to better meet the needs of residents. This will include consultation with residents on what services they would like to see.

On support, information, advice and guidance some further progress has been made from the position set out in the JSNA work. For example, South Yorkshire Credit Union has now opened a branch in Acomb which provides access to its financial products as well as selling a range of competitively priced household goods. It is also looking at ways to increase its outreach across the city. FISG has funded various projects in this area including funding Citizen's Advice Bureau workers to give welfare advice in GP surgeries and funding the Advice York coordinator role for a further year. FISG also provided a grant to Advice York to enable them to provide training for staff from a range of advice services to enable staff to provide second tier debt support to residents. A financial inclusion worker has also been funded through Arc Light to help vulnerable individuals in the early stages of resettlement to manage money effectively.

On digital inclusion, FISG has also extended funding to York Housing Association to employ a digital inclusion worker for a further year.

Amongst other objectives this will help residents to source better deals online for goods and services and target digital help to those likely to be affected by Universal Credit. We have also started to gather data through a survey on internet usage of council tenants carried out by the Money and Employment Advisers. Further, we also included a raft of questions on digital inclusion in the annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey for the first time this year. We are currently exploring options on how to best use this data to benefit residents and respond to their needs. Additionally, CYC's Digital Manager is a participant in FISG to ensure a joined up approach is taken.

The economic strategy, led by the York Economic Partnership, is due to be completed in the first quarter of next year. A main aim is to promote good growth and create more good quality jobs. Further, the Without Walls Partnership – which had previously published its City Action Plan focussed on growth – is undergoing a review to make it more effective at delivering outcomes that benefit York residents.

CYC has continued to play an active role in the employment and skills agenda; job fairs are still being coordinated by York Learning with support from Hiscox. The Experience Works 50+ and Head Start 18-24 initiatives have been completed, which combined helped over 100 people into employment. Sector specific roundtables are also taking place to support the development of workforce plans for both the existing and future workforce, focussing on key growth sectors: Construction, Rail Cluster, Software Engineering, Creative & Digital, Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing, Hospitality, Health Care and Biovale.

On apprenticeships, CYC has hosted regular recruitment events at West Offices through the York Apprenticeship Hub. CYC also leads an independent Apprenticeship Brokerage Service which works with both SMEs and training providers to create jobs for 18-24 year olds. Latest Government figures put York in the top 5% of 161 English local authorities for growth in apprenticeship take-up in the last year, with 1,340 residents of all ages starting an apprenticeship in 2014-15.

CYC has continued to play an active role in ensuring there is sufficient and affordable childcare available in the city.

It has continued the work outlined in the feedback from the poverty JSNA engagement event including supporting childcare providers to remain financially viable and providing direct stimulus where there is active encouragement of new providers to the market.

On housing, huge changes in the national policy landscape will significantly affect what CYC is realistically able to deliver in terms of building housing. Different approaches are being on explored on how best to respond to this.

Finally, Full Council decided on 17/12/15, following representations, a consultation with residents and a review, to increase the maximum amount of Council Tax Support available to residents on a low income to 77.5% from 70%. This will be effective from April 2016.

AR/JM

29/12/15