
Executive Recovery Report – Annex 4

18th March 2021

Communities Update

1. This report provides an update on the Communities response to the pandemic, with a transitional approach proposed for the virtual hubs for the period April - July

Hubs

2. The Communities & Equalities team continue to operate a network of five virtual hubs (Tang Hall, York Travellers Trust Clifton, Foxwood Community Centre, Clements Hall and Haxby Memorial Hall) managed by up to 10 CYC staff per day and supported by a body of dedicated “hub volunteers”.
3. The hubs are now principally concerned with:
 - a. supporting the clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) and others who were referred for support in earlier lockdowns
 - b. developing proactive community schemes for example around food to respond to local need
4. Where once there were also a significant number of requests for help routed to hubs via the Customer Centre, these have now largely dried up.
5. The hubs had been making between 30 and 150 calls per day; however, this has increased in recent days with a further 3,800 names being added to the CEV list (which now stands at 11,523). Whilst this has created an immediate pressure in making the calls there is little evidence that these additional names will lead to a demand for significant ongoing support.

6. Shielding will come to an end on 31 March and government funding for the hubs will no doubt cease at that point. Our intention will be to resume the roll out of physical hubs; however, physical hubs clearly cannot operate before July at the earliest and there is a danger of a hiatus in support for residents. It is clear that there are issues for individuals and communities around mental health and wellbeing caused by isolation, financial and other pressures associated with the pandemic and that these are exacerbated by the disruption to normal community support mechanisms.
7. To address these needs a transitional approach will be taken to support individuals and communities, moving away from crisis support and seeking to build resilient support networks. In this approach:
 - a. Community Hubs will work with ward teams in each ward to link existing community groups with those that have been formed in support of the Covid response with the aim of establishing a network of trusted community groups that will provide support to residents and using ward budgets to fill identified gaps in local provision
 - b. Hub managers are currently working to identify those who may benefit from engaging with a local hub longer-term and starting to interact with them by virtual means such as weekly wellbeing calls and socially distanced doorstep chats.
 - c. The hubs commissioning budget will be used to commission provision from partners, primarily in the voluntary and community sector, to meet identified cross-city needs
 - d. As lockdown restrictions ease the hubs will start to build to ensure there is at least one community hub for each ward offering a physical meeting place for local people to come together, and filling in the gaps between existing community venues.
 - e. When residents have Council Tax or rent arrears this will be used as a trigger point for contact with hubs as it indicates potential longer term challenges. This will provide the main front door for residents in crisis.
 - f. Investment in benefits and financial advice capacity and the commissioning of Citizens Advice to provide outreach services in the hubs will further strengthen this approach.
 - g. Live Well York is surveying partners and citizens with regard to community provision available to address social isolation.

We will support to ensure that provision can operate in a covid-safe way. Community mapping is also being developed to provide residents with a visual representation of support and community offers available to them across each ward.

8. Once community venues and existing hubs are fully open once more we will be able to return to the original ambition, as set out in November 2019, of establishing a “Good Place” peer support network, which all community venues will be invited to join, together with a York Community Hubs accreditation scheme, which will recognise the work and achievements of the venue and its volunteers and also let local residents know what they can expect from their local community facility.
9. Taking forward the above activities will be core functions for the Communities and Equalities Team going forward and will be carried out within existing staffing resources. In the short-term, however, the team will not be in a position to pick up this transitional work load from 1 April if all the current temporary additional staffing is removed on that date. This is because the current high work load associated with the CEV and other pressures / constraints associated with the pandemic are preventing team members being available to be trained and deployed on this work.
10. It is therefore proposed to keep a level of temporary staffing in place up to the end of July. The cost of this, approximately £50k, can be covered by government funding allocated to support the CEV. Our CEV allocation will be around £160k and we have not, in this financial year, had to draw on any of it.

An Area Based Approach

11. Moving forward we also intend to bring services together more effectively at community level. This will include those teams, such as Local Area Teams and Local Area Coordinators (LATs and LACs) who currently work on an area basis, as well as services, such as public realm, that have not previously worked in an area-based way, in order to co-ordinate their responses to community need. 19. Hub Mangers will facilitate regular meetings between staff working within each area. It is envisaged that the staff who would be involved in this approach, as a minimum, are:
 - Community Involvement Officers/Hub Managers
 - The proposed new Public Realm Area Managers

- Housing Management Officers
- Local Area Coordinators
- Local Area Teams
- Representatives from Enforcement Teams
- Representatives from Adult Social Care Community Teams
- Representatives from Public Health
- School Effectiveness Service and representatives from York Schools and Academies Board
- Any other areas as requested

12. Feedback from these meetings will be passed to councillors and ward teams regularly via their Community Involvement Officers, and councillors would be able to use the same mechanism to pass hubs relevant local intelligence.

Resource

13. Additional resources were allocated by the Executive to implement the roll out of community hubs from government funding provided to respond to Covid-19. The funding was allocated for the purposes of deploying staffing, creating operational budgets to establish hubs and commission activity within them, such as financial inclusion work, and to support key partner activities. The following table shows the resources allocated over this financial year and the next. The resource has been re-profiled to reflect the current reality whereby the virtual hubs have been extended through a third lock-down and the roll out of actual hubs will not be able to commence until July.

	20/21	21/22	
Continue the current community hub / food poverty post	N/A	£54,000	Continuation of an existing role currently funded to the end of March 21
A hubs co-ordinator post	£18,000	£18,000	
Invest in benefits / financial advice capacity		£10,000	

Funding for a Volunteer Centre (York CVS)	£10,000	£30,000	
Commissioning of Citizens Advice York	£20,000		To provide support to the hubs model
A commissioning fund to support hubs and provide cross-city activity in support of vulnerable people		£70,000	
TOTAL			£230,000

Volunteering

14. 1,087 individual volunteers have now been deployed, just under half through the hubs and the rest through allocation to a range of other organisations. 500 remain on the books and enable us to respond to urgent requests, e.g. 125 volunteers supplied recently to support rapid testing.
15. The new volunteer centre at CVS is up and running and is now the focal point for new volunteer recruitment. Working with our various partners including Ready for Anything, York Cares, the Universities, etc. we now have a wide range of solutions to meet new requests for volunteers.
16. The Live Well York website continues to be developed to be the primary source of social and wellbeing information for residents in respect to Covid-19 (see: COVID 19 (livewellyork.co.uk)). There has been a significant increase in usage as a result. Live Well York now has the highest usage per population, comparing equivalent information and advice platforms across Yorkshire and the Humber (quarter 3 2020-21).