

WITHOUT WALLS

building a future for york

Without Walls' Anti Poverty Strategy (draft 5/7/07)

Purpose:

This strategy has been developed by Without Walls, York's local strategic partnership to outline an agreed way forward for ensuring that poverty in the city is minimised and the gap between rich and poor narrowed. The strategy will bring together existing initiatives that partners have set up as well as proposing new initiatives and ways of working to be agreed by the local strategic partnership.

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What do we mean by 'Poverty'?

- Poverty has been defined in a number of different ways. It is difficult to separate poverty from wider issues of social exclusion but for the purpose of this strategy it will be defined as follows:

'Poverty is a cause of social exclusion and exists when people do not have the financial resources to obtain adequate living conditions, diet and access to services and activities generally considered necessary to participate fully in society'

Why does York need an anti poverty strategy?

- York needs an anti-poverty strategy because:
 - It has clear pockets of poverty, even though York is seen to be a reasonably prosperous city with living standards, wage levels and proportions of differing population groups on state benefits close to national averages

- ii. In terms of the geographical areas of the city with the highest concentrations of people at risk of poverty the government's 'Index of multiple deprivation' (IMD, ODPM 2004), shows that York has 6 wards which contain pockets of deprivation within the 20% most deprived in England. (Based on measures for Super Output Areas and accounting for 6573 households and 15,082 people; for more details see Annex A and IMD maps)
- iii. Poverty rates in York are on average at least as high as they are nationally
- iv. One in five of York's population are poor using the *Breadline Britain* measure of lacking three or more socially perceived necessities, such as regular hot meals, holidays, new or best clothes for festivals and events, or certain important household items such as a freezer. (*From 'A study in town life: living standards in the city of York 100 years after Rowntree', Huby, Bradshaw and Corden, 1999*)
- v. One in six are living in self-perceived absolute poverty (i.e. not enough money to have an adequate diet, pay housing costs, water rates, have proper sanitation and get basic health, education and information).
- vi. A survey carried out by the Anti-poverty working group during 2005/6 of a wide range of public and voluntary sector agencies identified significant evidence of poverty as well as support for a more visible approach for tackling poverty in a city seen as generally affluent. (*A summary of the views given in the survey is available from the Anti-poverty working group*)
- vii. Housing costs in York are high and have increased faster than earnings with average house prices increasing by 38% compared with an equivalent increase of only 16% in full time gross weekly earnings between 2002 and 2005 (*source: Housing Strategy, 2006*)
- viii. Significant job losses from York's food manufacturing and service sectors over the past couple of years have put large numbers of people at increased risk of poverty in the city; the impact of this has been recognised by the award of Rapid Response funding from Job Centre Plus
- ix. There is an increasing recognition of the need to 'narrow the gap' between most and least deprived areas with a growing body of work showing the negative (or at least "non-positive") outcomes associated with greater levels of income inequality at national and city-wide levels. (*E.g. in Richard Wilkinson's publication 'The Impact of Inequality: how to make sick societies healthier' (Routledge, 2005).*)
- x. The 'trickle down effect' whereby wealth 'trickles' from rich to poor areas was found not to have worked in Britain as far back as in the mid-1990s
- xi. (*Income & Wealth: report of the JRF Inquiry Group' 1995, summarised in Findings, Joseph Rowntree Foundation.*)

The effects of poverty in York

3. It is widely recognised at a national level that:

- i. Poverty usually affects particular population groups, for example the unemployed, single older women, lone parents, people with poor health and disabilities, carers, those on low pay and in part-time work, those living in social housing, travellers and some other minority ethnic groups, students and families with children.
 - ii. The impact of poverty on these groups can take the form of ill-health, homelessness, debt, isolation, personal and family insecurity and relationship breakdown, and in some cases psychiatric illness, drug and alcohol abuse and crime.
 - iii. Living on a low income and being at risk of poverty is not limited to just those who have to rely on benefits. It also affects those who may be working but are on a low wage or, like many older people who receive a pension, are on fixed incomes that are gradually reducing in value. Whilst York has low unemployment rates and reasonable 'average wages' this masks the fact that there are a significant proportion of low waged jobs in the York economy e.g. in the tourism sector.
 - iv. Additionally, inequality in wealth and income has been found to impact negatively on the fabric of society as a whole; suggesting that within a city the impact of inequality (including poverty) stretches across the population as a whole (*see reference to Richard Wilkinson's work above*)
4. Locally:
- i. Poverty affects different areas of the city differently, concentrated in areas with larger proportions of social housing and which may be poorly served by public transport.
 - ii. There is a great disparity between the most deprived and richest wards in the city. (*See the details on the IMD given in Annex A and maps*)
 - iii. Respondents to the anti-poverty survey readily identified the areas of the city and groups of people where they most frequently came across evidence of poverty, and its effects on individual and community lives. As well as the examples listed above such as ill health and debt, the lack of choice and opportunity that poverty forces on people was highlighted as a key impact. This includes the choice of work available as well as choice of social activities or housing.

Broad approach of an anti poverty Strategy for York

- 5. It is proposed that, as a general principle, the strategy should focus on initiatives that are affordable and feasible and practices we have the power to change. This will include promoting what is already being done and improving partnership working between and within relevant agencies. It should include the re-direction of resources to the most deprived individuals, families, schools and communities. It is also hoped that developing a citywide anti-poverty strategy will increase the potential to attract new resources into the city to tackle poverty.
- 6. However, it is also suggested that we should express concerns about national policies and practices which contribute to poverty in York, and to

consider applying for 'enabling measures' through the Local Area Agreement (LAA) process, as and when opportunities present themselves, to help address these concerns.

Aims of the strategy

7. The aims of the strategy are to:
- a) Maximise incomes of individuals in poverty
 - b) Minimise the cost of living in York and improve the take up of local goods and services
 - c) Improve partnership working and organisational responses to poverty.

Key areas for action

8. Bearing in mind the broad approach and aims of the strategy a number of key areas for actions have been identified which should be focussed on the neighbourhoods and groups of people most affected by poverty, to ensure that the strategy is delivered.

a) Maximise incomes of individuals in poverty

- i. Benefits and tax credits take up: Target, resource and co-ordinate campaigns to maximise the take-up of benefits and other entitlements such as Council Tax Benefit, free school meals, free prescriptions and benefits for older people.
- ii. Employment: Target, resource and co-ordinate initiatives to improve employment prospects and opportunities for people on low incomes or facing other barriers to employment
- iii. Minimise barriers to employment: Support affordable nursery provision and out of school activities targeted at low income families and affordable transport initiatives in recognition that lack of these can be a barrier to work (and training).
- iv. Education and training: Target education, training and learning initiatives for people on low incomes and schools with a high proportion of children from low-income households.

b) Minimise the cost of living in York and increase take up of available services

Affordable goods and services:

- i. Maximise an adequate supply of decent affordable housing of various types and sizes by ensuring the affordable housing quota for new housing developments is maintained
- ii. Promote and maximise access to affordable household insurance schemes (such as 'Simple' insurance for council tenants) and other financial services such as secure savings and affordable loans through York Credit Union

- iii. Promote and maximise access to free and affordable health services e.g. dentistry, for those on low incomes
- iv. Promote and maximise access to energy efficiency schemes and other affordable warmth measures, such as preferential tariffs, to reduce fuel poverty for at risk residents
- v. Explore the introduction of a York discount card linked to benefits take-up and discounts for a wide range of goods and services
- vi. Assist low income individuals and families with the costs of education, learning and leisure such as purchase of school uniforms, computers, payment for school trips and other fees, including via Local Authority remissions and other voluntary schemes
- vii. Target and coordinate affordable transport initiatives, for example travel tokens and cheaper fares
- viii. Promote and support initiatives such as the Community Furniture Store and York LETS scheme - which enables the exchange of goods and services between individuals and/or community groups using a local currency the 'Yorkey'

Better information and targeting of services:

- ix. Improve coordination, targeting and accessibility of information including via
 - o The Citizen's Guide (targeted at interest groups including carers)
 - o The Council's A to Z guide
 - o Road shows and publicity events
- x. Review & update the new CAB booklet 'York on a budget'

c) Improve partnership working and organisational responses to poverty

Promote take-up of free, high quality civil legal advice

- i. Improve access to good, up to date information on how to access advice in low income areas and targeted at groups on low incomes
- ii. Encourage take up of advice across the range of legal issues such as housing, employment, family, debt and benefits law
- iii. Maintain and promote York Advice Service Partnership (YASP) which aims to improve access to advice on rights and responsibilities and which can help to bring in new resources to the city

Debt recovery

- iv. Encourage key organisations, such as the council, registered social landlords and utility suppliers to develop coordinated and sensitive arrears preventions, debt recovery and disconnection policies
- v. Improve coordination of and access to effective debt counselling and management services

'Poverty proofing' organisational policy and practice

- vi. Encourage agencies to introduce and share training for staff, including those in front-line roles, to recognise poverty and identify good practice for maximising incomes and savings

- vii. Encourage key organisations to consider the significance of poverty in framing policy across all areas of work, and in particular to examine the impact of key policies such as those on employment, housing and access to services such as learning and leisure
- viii. Encourage local organisations and partnerships to challenge national policy and practice, as appropriate, where it has an adverse impact communities or people in poverty, e.g. via Citizens' Advice Bureau social policy forums

Information sharing and partnership

- ix. Improve coordination and information sharing between and within agencies to address both individual issues and to develop new approaches to tackling and/or monitoring poverty, e.g. setting up multi-agency case-conferences to address needs of individual households; establishing new ways of monitoring poverty at the local level
- x. Increase and/or ensure sustainable support for the work of voluntary and community organisations which tackle and alleviate the impact of poverty

Delivering the strategy and monitoring progress

Delivering the strategy

9. Citywide ownership of the anti-poverty strategy lies with Without Walls, York's Local Strategic Partnership, which identified the need for a multi-agency approach to reducing poverty in the city in the Inclusive City theme of the community strategy, 'York – a city making history'. The Inclusive York Forum which is promoting this anti-poverty strategy and which will retain oversight of delivery and progress oversees this theme. Inclusive York Forum will act as a 'champion' for the strategy, but has no resources itself to undertake new initiatives and only limited resources to over see implementation of the strategy. Individual agencies and partnerships will therefore need to consider what further steps they can undertake individually or in partnership, or how they may be able to work differently which will help meet the key aims and actions outlined above, to reduce poverty and its impact.
10. Commitments by partnerships and agencies will then be drawn together into an action plan which will identify and include lead partners and timescales for exploring new proposals and achieving the desired improvements or outcomes. Where additional resources are needed before new activities can be put in place it is suggested that a partnership approach to bidding for new resources may be most effective, but it is recognised that implementation may require a longer time.
11. As stated at the outset of this strategy significant work is already being undertaken and developed by individual agencies and partnerships to reduce poverty and its impact. For example, the 'Children and Young Peoples' Plan 2007-2010' sets out a section on 'Achieving Economic Well-being' in line with the Government's 'Every Child Matters' policy.

12. In addition, over the past 12 months organisations in York have worked together to develop York's Local Area Agreement, which is, in effect, the first 3-year delivery plan for the Community Strategy. This has, as one of its underlying themes, 'narrowing the gap' between most and least deprived areas), tackling inequality and supporting social mobility and economic inclusion.
13. This Local Area Agreement therefore reinforces the need for a citywide approach to reduce poverty and it is expected that partnerships and agencies will support the aims of this citywide anti-poverty strategy, recognising that the issues raised from a perspective of poverty also impact on and are impacted by the economy, health, education, community safety, the environment and so on.
14. Annex B sets out the high level structure chart which will support of delivery of the anti-poverty strategy.

Consultation with communities

15. Whilst there has been some consultation as part of the work to develop this strategy with agencies working with people on low incomes, there has, so far, been no direct engagement with people living on low incomes in the city. There is a need therefore to seek out the views of people living in poverty in the city, whether this is through existing consultation mechanisms (such as the Council's TalkAbout panel), or via intermediaries such as community groups or service providers, who may be able to provide a means of contacting individuals or groups of people.
16. For the broad strategy consultation may help in terms of determining what the priorities should be and how these are tackled. Where new initiatives are being considered it is important that consultation with the potential beneficiaries or people likely to be affected should take place. For example, in relation to the possible introduction of a York Discount Card, consultation with people the card is aimed at before, during and after an initial trial or pilot scheme would be an essential part of its development and evaluation.

Initial priorities for an anti-poverty strategy action plan

17. The key areas for action listed above incorporate a great many individual activities and proposals, which might be broken down in relation to their status as follows:
 - i. Work which is underway: but needs more sustainable support or better targeting and promotion.
 - ii. Activities which are supported by well-established partnerships and resources: they simply need monitoring to ensure that the work planned achieves the expected outcomes.
 - iii. Proposals for consideration only at this stage: which will need new, dedicated resources if they are to be put in place
 - iv. Recommended actions concerned with internal organisational procedures or improvements to the way different agencies work

together: which need time resources but not necessarily new capital or revenue resources.

18. Without Walls partnerships wishing to support the anti-poverty strategy are requested to identify up to 5 actions or proposals, and associated indicators, which will contribute to the overall aims of the strategy to minimise poverty and its impact in the City of York. These should be based on the key areas of work outlined above and may include a mixture of existing and new activities and indicators, such as:
 - i. Actions and indicators within the Local Area Agreement or other existing strategy
 - ii. Actions to explore or develop new initiatives or new ways of working, and which may lead to new indicators of poverty in the city.

Annex C sets out an example by Inclusive York Forum for information.

19. Individual partnership action plans will be brought together into an Anti-Poverty Strategy Action Plan by the Anti-Poverty Working Group, which is a sub-group of Inclusive York Forum.

Monitoring progress

20. The Local Area Agreement, as stated above, includes a number of outcome areas and indicators which are relevant to this strategy and it is likely that a number of these will be used to monitor progress of the anti-poverty strategy.
21. Actions to develop new initiatives may be monitored via regular progress reports, until such time as new measures can be identified for them.
22. However, there may also be actions proposed which are about developing new ways of monitoring changes in the levels of poverty, e.g. in Leeds, Job Centre Plus data is used to monitor changes in the uptake of particular types of benefits in specific areas of the city.
23. In order to provide an overview of progress of the anti-poverty strategy it is proposed that six-monthly reviews should be brought to Inclusive York Forum, including performance indicators where possible, so that any issues or problems can be raised with the Without Walls Partnership and/or Executive Delivery Board.

Annex A

Collecting data on poverty

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2004

Source: www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1128444

The IMD 2004 build on the findings of the IMD 2000 and introduced a new area classification – the **Super Output Area (SOA)**. SOAs are a lot smaller than ward boundaries, possibly two or three streets in some cases and they fit within the existing wards. For IMD 2004, levels of different types of deprivation, e.g. relating to health or employment have been calculated and are known as domain scores which together are weighted and make up the total SOA score. The government's reason for using SOAs is that 'it allows us to better identify and target areas where small pockets of deprivation exist'.

Overleaf is a map of York's SOAs, ranked according to level of deprivation:

Comparing data over time

It is difficult to establish trends in levels of poverty over time using IMD or Census data – this is because:

- The areas being measured differ – either at a ward or SOA level. Where ward level data is used (Census or IMD 2000), this cannot be readily compared in York as local ward boundaries have changed over time
- The variables being measured differ, for example Census 1991 and 2001 and IMD 2000 and 2004 all use slightly different variables.

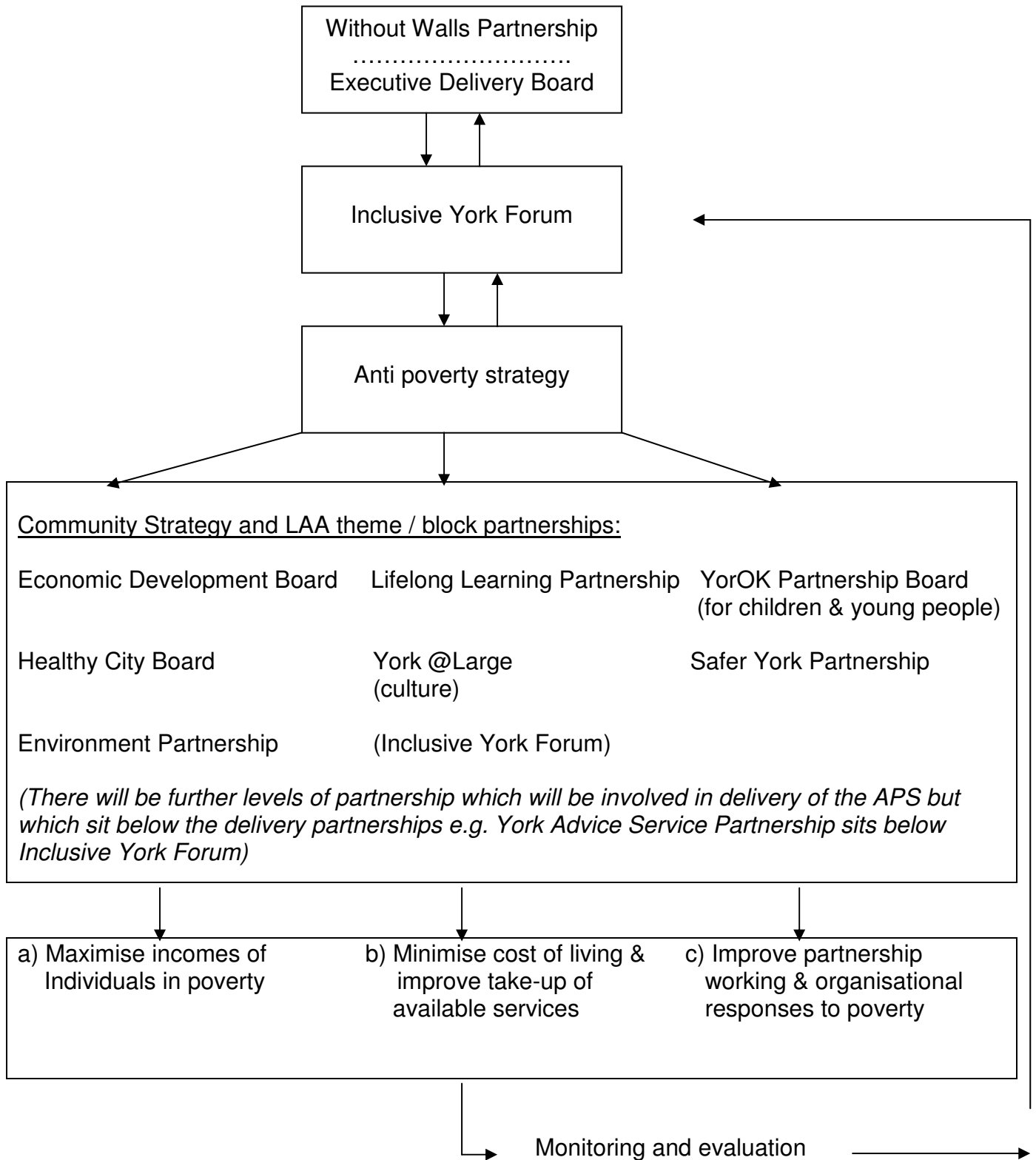
Even so, the IMD 2004 is still the most up to date and comprehensive data currently available on deprivation levels nationally.

A new IMD for 2010

The Government is currently consulting on a new IMD, which will be broadly comparable to the 2004 IMD, but which will have less reliance on Census data. It is expected that the new IMD figures will be published in 2010.

Annex B

Structure chart – how partners will deliver the strategy



Annex C

Example of Partnership contribution to Anti-Poverty Action Plan by: Inclusive York Forum

| Action | Indicator /measure | Contribution to APS | Plan link / new | Frequency of monitoring | Lead agency |
|--|--|--|-----------------------|--|---|
| 1. Support & promote York Credit Union to develop into a sustainable business providing secure savings & affordable loans | YCU membership – in line with the YCU business plan (Target: 3,000 members by 2009/10*) *figure amended by YCU - not yet changed in LAA | Provides opportunity for people on low incomes & excluded from mainstream finance to access affordable loans & secure savings | (LAA – EDE 4.12) | Quarterly or 6-monthly | York Credit Union (Inclusive York Forum) |
| 2. Promote the take-up of high quality advice on civil legal matters through improving access to & promotion of advice | % of people in need of civil legal advice seeking help from advice agencies | The provision of timely & good quality advice can prevent homelessness, increase take-up of benefits &/or work opportunities & thus reduce poverty | (LAA - EDE4.11) | Annual (TalkAbout) | York Advice Service Partnership (YASP) |
| 3. Investigate further & pilot a York Discount card linked to uptake of benefits | Resources found for pilot of Discount card at a cost of £12,000. Discount card in place | Piloting card would allow agencies to check if take up of benefits improved & to test value of card with people on low incomes | Anti-poverty strategy | Quarterly or 6 monthly progress report | Anti-poverty strategy working group / York Citizens Advice Bureau |
| 4. Encourage City of York Council & other key agencies to introduce a mechanism to 'poverty proof new policies & practices | Mechanism in place by 'x' number of agencies by given timescale. | To ensure that key agencies in the city consider the potential impact of their proposals on people in poverty before decisions taken | Anti-poverty strategy | Quarterly or 6 monthly progress report | Anti-poverty strategy working group/ Inclusive York Forum |
| 5. Review & update 'York on a budget' publication | Feedback from partner agencies on the usefulness of the booklet via survey | To promote existing free & low cost services, facilities & activities to people on low incomes | Anti-poverty strategy | Annual review survey | York CAB / Anti-poverty strategy working group |