

Notes from Workshop 1 Supporting those who are struggling financially
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The session began with a presentation from Pauline Stuchfield. Participants then discussed a number of questions and shared their knowledge and experience. Time did not allow discussion of all topics suggested in the presentation.

Is there a place for a regional approach to address poverty within an overarching approach on reducing inequalities?

There was strong support for a shared strategy to address poverty across York and North Yorkshire. The birth of the new North Yorkshire Unitary Authority and even closer working with City of York provide a good opportunity for this. Having a collective resource to support data collection will enable us to understand and evidence the distribution and scale of poverty and main trends across the whole geography whilst allowing drill down at local level to identify particular challenges and verify impacts of interventions. Communities are very diverse and important to be able to pinpoint areas of need at the very local level. Delegates thought the proposed data dashboard would be useful. Understanding and presenting issues across the broad geography of urban, rural and coast and also being able to go do and narrow will enable more effective targeting of funding applications. A well presented evidence base will also have potential to influence funding programmes eg launch of the new UK Shared Prosperity Fund or future DEFRA funding. Strong data will also support the LEP to tackle identified skills gaps.

Participants agreed that it makes sense to use existing structures to develop a strategy and action plan to address poverty with consideration to the “new” geographies of locality / place based working as North Yorkshire moves towards a unitary structure. Delegates are seeing an increase in poverty amongst residents and we need to take effective action in response.

To support development of a regional (N Yorks and City of York) strategy Pauline at CoY, Caroline at CFY and Marie-Ann Jackson at NYCC can get data and drill down to help us identify areas of focus and a tailored response. Important not to be too prescriptive or rigid but to have a flexible and evolving approach. Also need to make links to more local strategies. There was interest in exploring what role the Place Standard might have in this.

“Ownership” of a regional strategy and operational implementation of a related action plan will involve a range of partners. It would be important to consider education/skills and housing as major alleviators of poverty. Financial and digital literacy can be supported through adult education and employment support such as ATI.

What are your local governance structures around addressing poverty?

What makes a difference?

There are several effective district level partnerships / structures working to address poverty including:

- Ryedale Community Connect, a public sector and VCSE partnership established to respond to covid-19 impacts which include food and fuel poverty, increased personal debt <https://www.ryedale-community-connect.com/>
- Harrogate BC's "My Neighbourhood" is a long running partnership approach to supporting areas with high IMD scores.
- Selby District AVS has started an Anti-Poverty Partnership.

Positive impacts come from:

- using data to see where we are not reaching or making a difference
- collaborating; identifying the organisation best placed to respond to specific issues and not replicating activity; sharing good practice; comparing and learning from different approaches; using all communication options to spread information eg about HSF.

Challenges are often at a very individual level eg when people struggle to take actions suggested or make poor decisions, particularly when this continues over a long time. There was an acknowledgement that we can't always "fix" things for people but we must work to keep people as safe as possible. If we can identify potential for a worker / organisation to develop a longer-term relationship with someone this can lead to gradual, positive shifts over time. Officers working locally eg in housing can be an under-utilised resource.

What are rural and coastal impacts of poverty as opposed to urban?

Didn't get chance to discuss but recognition that these are three distinct contexts.

How do we address stigma around accessing support?

Stigma still a challenge even during the pandemic. Language around claiming benefits not helpful. Assumptions can be wrong too eg being homeless does not necessarily equate to being in poverty. How can we achieve the normalisation of needing support sometimes? Identify person/organisation best placed to ask the question of people to check they are accessing the best support for them. Links to grassroots organisations eg those tackling food poverty in face-to-face settings can help. Also need to find ways to hear the voice of service users.

Attendees were happy for contact details to be shared. Also agreed proposed next steps:

- Feed into the NY & Y Regional Communities Recovery Groups
- Make recommendations to NY & Y Chief Executives Group