

Equality Impact Assessment – Proposal for removal of funding for the York Road Project

Officer responsible for completing EIA: Funding Officer / Louise Strongitharm	Manager responsible for EIA: Louise Strongitharm
Strategic Director responsible for EIA: Louise Strongitharm	Date last updated: 7 December 2023

1. Introduction

This Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) seeks to identify impacts and effect of this proposal with the aim of assessing whether it would have a disparate impact on persons with a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. As part of this assessment, consideration will be given to ways in which any such impact can be avoided or mitigated, any negative impacts arising from this proposal will be assessed and where this could be reduced in their impact this will be noted in the attached action plan. The Council also recognises that it may not completely remove all negative impacts.

The purpose is to provide impartial information to assist in the decision-making process and inform rather than determine policy. The objective is not to make the decision but to assist decision makers through the provision of relevant information.

The Council faces a critical financial shortfall owing to its historic investment strategy which has resulted in unaffordable borrowing, inadequate steps to repay that borrowing and high values of irrecoverable loans.

To address these severe financial challenges the Council must make significant saving alongside taking steps to 'live within its means' in the future.

Widespread reductions and changes to public-facing services, alongside reducing management and internal costs, have been set out in the [Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy](#).

This Equality Impact Assessment covers the exercising of the break clause in the Service Level Agreement and removal of £43,290 annual grant funding to the York Road Project (YRP) as part of the Council's withdrawal of all discretionary funding from 2024/25.

In April 2023 the Council signed a new Service Level Agreement with the York Road Project (YRP) to provide a rapid response service to rough sleepers and individuals at risk of homelessness in Woking through the Resource and Prevention Centre (The Prop).

This charity works closely with officers of the Council in both the Rough Sleeping and Community Safety teams providing a discretionary service to those who do not meet the criteria for statutory services. Statutory services are provided directly by the Council, with some assistance from YRP in relation to crime, disorder, and anti-social behaviour. The work of YRP supports the statutory services provided by Central and Local Government.

The YRP accounts available on the Charities Commission website for the year to 31 March 2022 shows funding from Woking BC as just over 6% of the charity's total funding based on a higher annual payment than provided in the current agreement.

The terms of the SLA require not less than 3 months notice to be given in writing. The Agreement was signed on 31 March 2023.

2. Impact on services

The following services will stop if funding is removed.

- Experienced Outreach Team supports anyone experiencing homelessness, whether they are rough sleeping i.e., 'on the streets' or perhaps sleeping in a tent or car. This includes anyone without safe, secure accommodation i.e., sofa surfing or squatting.
- Activities such as doing laundry or accessing the internet will stop.
- Accommodation for the homeless will shut.

3. Engagement and consultation

The Council has carried out public engagement on all proposed savings to ensure a balanced budget for the 2024/25 financial year.

The **first phase of the engagement** took place in summer 2023. Residents and businesses had the opportunity to have their say on how to tackle the budget shortfall. This is what they had to say about the economic impact. [Help shape the future of discretionary council services | Woking Community Forum](#)

The **second phase of the public engagement** took place between **2 October and 12 November**.

Residents and businesses had another opportunity to scrutinise the proposed savings and have their say.

This included a range of options for finding further budget savings, such as increasing Council tax and making changes to the way services are delivered, which may mean reducing or withdrawing services, or indeed making revised charges or working with partner organisations. The outcome of this consultation will be reported to Council in January 2024, with a full Council decision on 8 February 2024. The report can be found [here](#).

		Positive impact?			Negative impact?	No specific impact	What will the impact be? If the impact is negative how can it be mitigated? (action)
		Eliminate discrimination	Advance equality	Good relations			
Gender	Men				x		<p>77% of YRP clients have been males over the past year (compared to 49.7% of Woking population), so withdrawal of funding will disproportionately impact this gender.</p> <p>Mitigation: The Council will consider earmarking an element of the Homelessness grants it receives from Government annually to assist YRP – when allocation for 2024/25 is announced.</p> <p>The Funding Officer at the Council is working to direct charities and non-profit organisations to potential alternative funding, where possible, and to alert funders to the issues. Help and support to the charity has been offered via the Housing Advice Team and is awaiting a response. YRP has been successful in securing grant funding through collaborative funding bids with the Council, in particular Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) funding.</p> <p>Identify alternative provision and resources to support the homeless. Investigate what national charities can offer at a local level.</p> <p>Facilitate discussions with partner organisations about collaborative work.</p>
	Women					x	<p>21% of YRP clients have been females over the past year, so no specific impacts above those for all groups are expected for women.</p>
Gender Reassignment					x		<p>Only 2% of YRP clients are in this group but the challenges presented by gender reassignment can lead to mental health issues which in turn lead to homelessness. YRP has worked very successfully with people on this issue.</p> <p>Mitigation as above</p>

		Positive impact?			Negative impact?	No specific impact	What will the impact be? If the impact is negative how can it be mitigated? (action)
Race	White					x	78% of YRP clients are white British/Irish/other white, consistent with the Woking population overall (78.4%). There is no specific impact for this group.
	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups					x	3% of YRP clients are in this group. There is no specific impact for this group.
	Asian/Asian British					x	7% of YRP clients are in this group, which is less than the numbers in the Woking population overall (14.2%). There is no specific impact for this group.
	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British				x		9% of YRP clients are in this group. This is higher than the numbers in the Woking population overall (3.5%) Mitigation as above.
	Gypsies / travellers					x	0.33% of YRP clients are in this group. There is no specific impact for this group.
	Other ethnic group				x		4% of YRP clients are in this group. This is higher than the numbers in the Woking population overall (2.1%) Mitigation as above.
Disability	Physical					x	YRP works with clients with complex needs, particularly those with mental health issues and substance misuse issues. Mitigations as above.
	Sensory					x	
	Learning Difficulties				x		
	Mental Health				x		
Sexual Orientation	Lesbian, gay men, bisexual					x	No client data available, however it is assumed there is no specific impact on this group.

Age	Older people (50+)					x	15% of YRP clients are aged 55-64 years old. YRP do not typically work with clients over 65 years old (as these are more likely to qualify for statutory homelessness services). Therefore no specific impact for this group.
	Middle aged people (26-49)					x	The majority of YRP clients are in this age group, so this age group will be disproportionately impacted. Mitigation as above.
	Younger people (16 - 25)					x	Only 9% of YRP clients have been in this category over the past year, less than the Woking population figures as a whole for this group. Therefore no specific impact.
Religion or Belief	Faith Groups					x	No client data available, however it is assumed there is no specific impact on this group.
Pregnancy & maternity						x	No client data available, however it is assumed there is no specific impact on this group.
Marriage & Civil Partnership						x	No client data available, however it is assumed there is no specific impact on this group.
Socio-economic Background						x	This service is only needed for the most vulnerable residents so any reduction to the service will disproportionately impact those in this category. Mitigations as above.
Carers						x	No client data available, however it is assumed there is no specific impact on this group.
Other identified groups	Immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers					x	No client data is available, but immigrants are likely to be disproportionately impacted because they are unlikely to meet the criteria required to qualify for statutory services. Mitigations as listed above.

	The homeless		X		<p>YRP is a specialist charity working with the homeless and some of those eligible for statutory support are reluctant to deal with authorities. This group will be disproportionately disadvantaged if funding is withdrawn.</p> <p>Mitigations as listed above.</p>
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Action Plan:

Actions identified from EIA	Target completion date	Responsible Officer	Comments
Volunteer Woking Funding Officer to contact YRP to offer support to secure funding from alternative sources.	31/03/2024	Funding Officer	Contact made via WBC Housing Advice Team.
Continue to jointly bid for Government grants when opportunities arise	Ongoing	Housing Solutions Manager	
Consider earmarking an element of the Homelessness grants it receives from Government annually to assist YRP, when the allocation for 2024/25 is announced to help maintain this service.	31/05/2024	Strategic Director - Communities	Announcements typically made in April/May.
Mapping exercise of statutory and discretionary offer.	31/03/2024	Corporate	
Identify alternative provision and resources to support the homeless. Investigate what national charities can offer at a local level.	31/03/2024	Corporate	
Facilitate discussions with partner organisations about collaborative work	31/03/2024	Corporate	
Monitor impacts identified above and mitigating actions. Identify any unforeseen impact and mitigations that can be explored.	3-6 months	Strategic Director /Corporate	

SIGNOFF:

LEGAL SERVICES: Completed	DATE: 8 January 2024
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR: Completed	DATE: 22 January 2024
REVIEW PANEL MEMBER: Completed	DATE: 4 January 2024