

Poverty Strategy Monitoring Report

Quarter 2 2014-15

Introduction

- 1.1 This report gives a summary of progress on the projects and performance indicators within the Council's Poverty Strategy 2014 – 2016 at the end of Quarter 2. There are currently 5 key performance indicators and 34 projects within the strategy.
- 1.2 Please contact Jackie Summerscales, Corporate Policy Team, Bury Council on 0161 253 7652 or e-mail j.a.summerscales@bury.gov.uk if you have any queries about this report.
- 1.3 Reports are produced bi-annually; an update will be available at the end of quarter 4 2014/2015.

Information in this report has been provided by the responsible service areas.

Managing the Money

Project	Commentary
Financial Inclusion and Worklessness Group	<p>The group meets on a bi-monthly basis with representatives from the Council, Six Town Housing, the Citizens Advice Bureau, Department of Work and Pensions, Debt Advice Charities and the four main housing associations operating in the Borough.</p> <p>This quarter we have been discussing holding an 'event' in an empty space in either The Rock, or Millgate Centre. The event is called 'Which Direction' with a view to providing a one day, one stop shop. All partners involved in the Bury HALG Financial Inclusion & Worklessness Group would be attending, along with guests such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All housing providers • Re-build furniture recycling provider • DWP – Universal Credit advice • Bury Council Employment & Training Team • National Careers Service • Barclays Bank • Digital Inclusion rep • Citizens Advice Bureau • Credit Union • Step Change Debt Charity • Trading Standards / anti loan shark <p>The aim would be to provide advice and guidance to passersby in light of the welfare reforms and introduction of Universal Credit.</p> <p>This event was originally planned for a date in October, but due to time restraints we have postponed the event until the New Year as we want it to be a professional affair.</p> <p>We also discussed how we can work together with our colleagues from Trading Standards to assist</p>

	<p>with financial scams that are taking place across the Borough such as 'fake' draws etc.</p> <p>We had a presentation from the DWP with detailed information and points of contact regarding Universal Credit.</p> <p>Our colleagues at Housing Benefit also keep us in the loop with ongoing benefit issues/updated information.</p>
Bury Council/Six Town Housing/CAB Corporate Debt Policy	<p>We continue to ensure that debt collection for the Council, STH and its partners is dealt with in a generic, clear and consistent corporate manner.</p> <p>Those who experience multiple complex debt issues are given the support they need to prevent increasing debt, promote personal capacity and create better life chances.</p>
Credit Union Project	The Credit Union continues to provide affordable credit and savings facilities for people living or working in Bury, thus preventing excessive charges and interest rates enforced by many financial organisations.
Debt advice and budgeting skills	Along with our partner agencies, such as StepChange and CAB, we are continuing to support residents who are struggling financially with free, independent debt advice and budgeting skills. We are expecting Universal Credit Personal Budgeting Support (PBS) referrals from the DWP to start shortly. These will be dealt with in-house within Customer Support and Collections.
Guidance for Residents Regarding Switching Energy Providers	The Collective Switching Campaign has now ended but information is available on the Council's Website. Two energy auctions were held in 2013 - 2925 Bury residents signed up and 364 of these switched, saving an average of around £126 per year off their energy bills. An overall saving of approximately £45,864.
Welfare Reform Board	The Welfare Reform Board continues to meet on a monthly basis to share information and provide a co-ordinated approach to Welfare Reform. The Board continues to oversee various initiatives such as Under Occupancy and the Food Poverty Project. The DWP update on Universal Credit and this gives the Board an opportunity to feedback on the affects to our residents. The impact of the sanctions regime remains to be a key issue and the Sanctions Working Party will continue to meet to discuss how this is managed in Bury.

Reducing Demand – Corporate Debt	A corporate task and finish group has been established to look at Bury’s approach to debt.

Claiming What is Due

Project	Commentary
Bury Support Fund	The decision to end Local Welfare Provision Funding 15/16 has been challenged in judicial review proceedings. As a result of this, consultation is now taking place with regard to future funding from 14/15.
Under Occupancy	Following the disbanding of the Housing Review Team, an officer from the Housing Assessment Team has been elected to contact customers affected by the under occupancy charge that cannot afford to pay their rent, with a view to finding potential solutions.
Working together to tackle Food Poverty	<p>We continue to work very closely with Porch Boxes. Porch Boxes are the only providers of food parcels in Bury. Further, they don't have a central depot for customers to turn up to. Rather, food parcels are delivered from various locations across Bury: including Whittaker St, Prestwich Cashiers and the Town Hall. The Community Food Action Group is currently looking at improving this provision as demand is increasing.</p> <p>The Council has in recent months provided Porch Boxes with a rent free storage space at Bradley Fold, as storage was becoming an issue for them. We continue to work with them to make emergency food fit for purpose in Bury.</p>
Energy Company Obligation Funding (ECO) and other energy efficiency schemes	Urban Renewal continues to work with delivery partner Keepmoat. To date, 30 households have received 40 energy efficiency measures.
Benefit Checks	We continue to work with our partners to ensure all our customers are receiving the right benefits at the right time. People's circumstances can easily change as can the support that is available to them. The CAB is firmly embedded onto the Bury Support Fund Team within Customer Support and Collections providing advice, guidance and resolutions to vulnerable customers who come through the service. We are receiving excellent feedback from our customers regarding our joint working relationship.

Discretionary Housing Payments	<p>We are on track to spend all the allocation of DHP funding.</p> <p>We will be looking to promote DHP's to people who haven't had one before and are struggling to meet the shortfall in rent or have rent arrears. Staff have been asked to identify any potential customers and invite them to make a claim. If any customer needs help completing the forms, we will refer them to our in-house CAB service or use our Visiting Officer.</p>
Reducing Dependency & Building Resilience	<p>By giving people the tools, confidence and opportunity to help themselves we are enabling customers to become resilient in adapting to changes; providing access to information through self service points and digital inclusion.</p>

Work Works

Project	Commentary
Preventing and Reducing Youth Unemployment	Manchester's City Deal programme and devolved budget work is taking place across Greater Manchester, training young unemployed people and helping to get them into work.
Bury Employment and Skills Plan	The Bury Employment and Skills Plan is currently being reviewed, an update will be provided at the end of quarter 4.
Bury Adult Learning Service	<p>The number of learners enrolled on employability courses (with qualifications) increased from 1436 in April, to 1612 at the end of August 2014. The courses were IT (655), English (206), Numeracy (213), ESOL (283), Preparation for Work (194) and programmes for learners with difficulties and disabilities (61). During the same period, the number of learners on a range of courses including first aid, food safety and care work increased from 120 to 145 and 180 learners enrolled on non-qualification based IT. The proportion of learners recruited from priority areas 1, 2 and 3 within the Borough were as follows: ICT- 54%, English- 59%, Maths- 61%, ESOL – 69%, Preparation for Life and Work (Employability Skills) – 64% and LLDD learners – 34.5%.</p> <p>In September the service recruited a further 7 trainees onto the Backing Young Bury Super 6 Scheme within the Council.</p>
Develop linkages across internal and partner organisations	An Economic Partnership consisting of internal and external partner organisations is to be established, to influence the Economic Strategy and complete the actions in the supporting action plan.
Bury Community Learning Partnership (CLP)	<p>Seven community and voluntary organisations delivered a range of learning opportunities resulting in 286 participating in activities. These include cooking on a budget, developing IT skills for people who are blind or visually impaired, personal development, first aid, car maintenance, food hygiene, lip reading, volunteering, and customer service.</p> <p>The Community Learning Partnership action plan is currently being updated by partners and will</p>

	report back on progress to date and key achievements at the end of the next quarter.
Sport and Physical Activity Service Pool of Volunteers	<p>We no longer have a formal sport and physical activity service pool of volunteers - Webpage needs updating.</p> <p>We signpost volunteer enquiries to Bury Third Sector Development Agency http://www.b3sda.org.uk/bury-volunteer-centre and Greater Manchester volunteer portals; Greater Manchester - http://www.sportsvolunteering.net/ & City of Manchester - http://manchestervsb.org/</p> <p>We recruit volunteers through these networks for event based activity as required.</p>
Support employers to recruit from priority groups	The working well initiative is to be expanded to include people with mental health issues.
Prestwich and Radcliffe Works	Radcliffe Works is currently under review.
Universal Credit	<p>UC replaces Housing Benefit, Income Support, Income Related Job Seekers Allowance, Income Based Employment and Support Allowance, Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit.</p> <p>UC went live in Bury for both singles and couples at the end of July 2014; numbers so far have been very low. We are told families are due to go live 26.1.2015.</p> <p>There is a long and complicated list of people who are exempt from claiming Universal Credit.</p> <p>Applications are expected to increase over the coming months.</p>
Work Programme Leavers	<p>This is a new project that supports Employment and Support Allowance (ESA WRAG Group) claimants who have been on the work programme for 2 years back into employment. Those taking part in the programme will have a personal work and wellbeing coach to help and guide them in finding work and once they have entered into employment they will continue to receive support for a further 12 months.</p> <p>35 Bury residents have been referred to the programme. They each have a dedicated key worker to work closely with them to remove barriers, in order to seriously consider employment as the next logical step. There has been good progress to integrate the programme across the Council and</p>

	partner organisations.
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Breaking the Cycle

Project	Commentary
Connecting Provision – Backing Young Bury	<p>Backing Young Bury provides opportunities for young people including extended work experience, pre-employment training and employment skills workshops (almost a third of all Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) claimants are aged between 16 and 24). The scheme aims to improve learning and working opportunities for young unemployed people by working in partnership within the Council and externally with the business community, colleges and training providers. We are now in the third and final year of the project. Youth unemployment has decreased in Bury but, there are still pockets of young people who remain far from securing employment.</p> <p>CLES (Centre for Local Economic Strategies) is currently undertaking a cost based analysis to establish the impact of investment in the scheme.</p>
Supporting Communities, Improving Lives	<p>We have been working with our partners to improve the lives of the families we are working with. To date, 57.9% of these families have been turned around. DCLG are impressed with our recent performance.</p>
Bury Employment Gateway	<p>The Employment Gateway opened in dedicated premises, funded by Bury College, in the Millgate Shopping Centre in May 2014. The key partners offering information, advice and vacancy matching services to young people in the Gateway are Bury College Employment Services, Job Centre Youth Hub, Local Authority Youth Services (Connexions) and National Careers Service and Work Programme providers. A Steering Group is overseeing the partnership to make sure it serves a 'one-stop' concept and develops efficiencies in duplicated services, in order to support those with the greatest need. In the first 3 months to the end of July, 84 apprenticeship jobs were secured</p>

	for young people through the services of the Gateway.
Engagement with schools and colleges	Bury College has reviewed the activities of the High School Liaison Team and Post-16 recruitment events. We will endeavour to support a greater understanding of the breadth of full time study programmes and higher education progression opportunities. Furthermore, we will increase the information on the opportunities available to school leavers through traineeships and apprenticeships, so that young people and their parents are able to make or support the right choices for their career paths from 14 years of age.
Doorstep Sports Clubs	A national sports programme is currently being delivered to young people in disadvantaged communities in Bury, to give them the opportunity to adopt a sporting habit for life. The coaches who run the clubs are skilled in leading sport as well as in supporting young people to make the best of them. The coaches are local and know the communities they work in. The sessions offer the opportunity for young people to participate in sports in a social setting, allowing them to attend with friends as well as meeting new people at the club. There is opportunity to take part in indoor and outdoor activity, so there is something for everyone. The young volunteers who co-run the clubs will gain new skills and qualifications as they learn to lead, with the opportunity to up skill and participate in training courses.

Every Contact Counts

Project	Commentary
Children's Centres	Children's Centres have established good links with families in their communities and have supported effective partnership working with other agencies in a bid to support families' economic prospects. Building on this good practice, a consultation around developing a new delivery model for Children's Centres identified a key objective – 'improving families' economic prospects, measured by reduced numbers of under-5's in household on benefits.'
Township Forums	Each of the six Township Forums have been hosting roundtable discussions with community representatives relating to the formulation of the annual Township Plans. A key objective in all the plans relates to 'Improving Health & Wellbeing'. The objective includes actions relating to reducing fuel poverty (Affordable Warmth Scheme) and providing better access to fresh fruit and vegetables and encouraging healthy eating for all through healthy eating on a budget course.
Customer care training	28 employees have attended tutor-led specialist customer service training during the period.
Digital Inclusion HG	Two digital hubs are in place – Whittaker Street and the Town Hall, training sessions are provided to people lacking the knowledge to use them and the numbers of users is encouraging. Further development of training for tablets is to be worked on over the coming months.
Driving cultural change	A Cultural Economy Strategy is currently being developed.

Performance Indicators

Proportion of children in poverty in Bury

The proportion of children living in poverty in Bury is **17.9%** (6,629 children), a reduction of 0.4% from the previous year (**18.3%**). This is an annual indicator and updated figures will be provided at the end of Quarter 4 2014/15.

Number of children eligible for free school meals

The number of children eligible for free school meals at the end of Quarter 2 (2014/15) is **4,233**. In comparison, the number of children eligible for free school meals at the end of Quarter 4 2013/2014 was **4,567**.

The reduction in numbers is likely due to a recent tightening of benefit criteria, in particular Job Seekers Allowance, as more and more people are being encouraged to work which entitles them to Working Tax Credit but, their children are no longer eligible for free school meals.

Number of food bank provisions supplied

The number of food parcels issued during Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 2014/15 (April 2014 – September 2014) was **1962**.

In comparison, the number of food parcels issued during Quarter 1 and 2 2012/13 was **982**, rising to **1860** during Quarter 1 and 2 of 2013/14.

As can be seen, demand for food parcels has increased considerably since the Bury Support Fund was established in April 2013, raising the profile of the scheme to those in need.

Number of people contacting Bury Citizens Advice Bureau (BCAB) for help with debt or benefit issues

BCAB dealt with **6,949** enquiries relating to debt and benefit issues during Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 2014/15 (April 2014 – September 2014). In comparison, there were **7,097** enquiries during Quarter 3 and 4 2013/14 (October 2013 – March 2014). The small increase in numbers is considered to be the result of an increase in spend and accumulation of debt during the Christmas period.

Number of people contacting Bury Citizens Advice Bureau (BCAB) for help due to pay day loans

During Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 2014/15 (April 2014 – September 2014) BCAB dealt with **550** enquiries regarding pay day/high interest loans (Note: some clients had multiple loans).