

Meeting Date: 06 October 2022
Portfolio: Economy, Enterprise & Housing
Key Decision: No
Within Policy and
Budget Framework YES
Public / Private Public

Title: Carlisle Welfare Reform Board
Report of: Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services
Report Number: GD.58 22

Purpose / Summary:

At the request of Members of the People Scrutiny Panel, the purpose of this report is to provide an overview and update of the work of Carlisle Welfare Reform Board, which is a coordinated local partnership response which aims to mitigate the impact of welfare reform and hardship across Carlisle and district.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that members of the People Scrutiny Panel receive this report, review the contents, and note the progress of the partnership.

Tracking

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Executive: | |
| Overview and Scrutiny: | |
| Council: | |

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** Established in 2012, Carlisle Welfare Reform Board is a multi-agency partnership group which meets on a bi-monthly basis to provide an effective coordinated local partnership response to mitigate where possible, the impact of welfare reform and hardship across Carlisle and district.
- 1.2** To achieve this, the group explores and monitors local impacts (and anticipates potential impacts) of the implementation of welfare changes; shares information updates; explores best practice; challenges, supports and assists each other to ensure the best outcomes for clients.
- 1.3** The group also forms a two-way communication with the Carlisle Community Resilience Group and when necessary, the statutory Cumbria Local resilience Forum.
- 1.4** The group continues to have a focus on the following:
- a)** Identifying gaps in local services; and driving activities required to close gaps
 - b)** Sharing timely pertinent information in relation to welfare reform, hardship and other external factors across Carlisle and district; and use this information to inform and support co-ordinated responses where possible
 - c)** Ensuring planned and co-ordinated welfare reform / hardship activities are implemented reflecting local shared priorities
 - d)** To work together to:
 - Share relevant key partner information
 - improving communication and data sharing
 - identify early opportunities to coordinate activities
 - reduce any barriers to multiagency working
- 1.5** The composition and governance of the group has remained intentionally fluid; this deliberate approach is considered appropriate given the breadth and depth of the reforms planned. Core members of the group to date are representative of:
- Carlisle City Council (Portfolio Holder, Deputy CE, Housing, Welfare, Policy, Customer Contact and Benefits)

- Housing Associations (Riverside, Impact, Castles & Coast)
- Department for Work and Pensions
- Cumbria Law Centre
- Food Bank / Churches Together
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Clinical Commissioning group

2. GROUP OBJECTIVES AND AGENDA

- 2.1** The group consistently monitors local data from all key partners and Cumbria Observatory, alongside key national trends and local case studies. This sharing of non-personalised information has proved very effective at identifying pressure points in the assessment and payments systems across the partnership which has led to a more joined up and consistent understanding of the processes.
- 2.2** The group is committed to ensuring there is an appropriate and effective local service response through:
- Sharing individual organisations good practice strategic and operational approaches to support people affected by welfare reforms
 - Working together to improve local service delivery to meet needs; support fair employment; professional practice and data sharing; sharing learning; training and shaping the future delivery of services
 - Researching best practice nationally and adopt good practice locally
 - Improving data sharing through the provision of local stats / data
- 2.4** Further to this work, since 2012 the group has delivered joint training, workshops, and public events; and is currently closely monitoring the impact of the cost-of-living pressures on vulnerable people.
- 2.5** Although continued to be hosted and supported by Carlisle City Council, the Chair of this group has recently been handed over to Shane Byrne from the Department of Work and Pensions. Shane will attend the People Scrutiny Panel meeting to give a verbal overview and presentation to members, on the groups focus for the next six months.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO THE CARLISLE PLAN PRIORITIES

4.1 The work of this Welfare Reform Board contributes to a range of our priorities but particularly relates to the focus on improving resident's quality of life.

Contact Officer: Tammie Rhodes Ext: 7217
Shane Byrne (DWP)

Appendices Carlisle Welfare Reform Board Terms of Reference
attached to report:
None

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:

- None

Carlisle Welfare Reform Board Terms of Reference

Purpose: To provide an effective coordinated partnership response to welfare reform across Carlisle and district

Objectives:

1. Identify gaps in local services; and drive actions required to close gaps
2. Monitor the cumulative impact of welfare reform and use this information to inform co-ordinated action planning
3. Ensure that planned and co-ordinated welfare reform actions are implemented reflecting local priorities

Group members will commit to:

- a) Sign up to a local welfare reform commitment and achieving shared actions / priorities through the terms of reference
- b) Share individual organisations good practice strategic and operational approaches to support people affected by welfare reforms
- c) Work together to improve local service delivery to meet needs; support fair employment; professional practice and data sharing; sharing learning; training and shaping the future delivery of services
- d) Research best practice nationally and adopt good practice locally
- e) Improve data sharing to support priorities set, through the provision of local stats / data; exploring and implementing mechanisms such as:
 - Share point platform
 - Information sharing protocol

Meetings:

- All meetings will be chaired by a representative officer of Carlisle City Council
- Decisions made by consensus
- Meeting agendas and minutes will be provided by Carlisle City Council, this includes:
 - Preparing agendas and supporting papers
 - Preparing meeting notes and information
- Meetings will be held quarterly at the Civic Centre in Carlisle
- The terms of reference will be reviewed annually