

REPORT FROM: CORPORATE DIRECTOR

TO: EXECUTIVE

DATE: 20th AUGUST 2015

Report Author: Philip Mousdale
Tel. No: 0128261634
E-mail: Philip.mousdale@pendle.gov.uk

LANCASHIRE FAIRNESS COMMISSION

PURPOSE OF REPORT: To inform and comment on the recommendations of the Lancashire Fairness Commission

RECOMMENDATION

- (1) That the Executive formulate comments for feedback to the Lancashire Leaders' Meeting

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) To provide evidence of the Council's activities and views on the Commission's recommendation

ISSUE

1. The Lancashire Fairness Commission has published its report "Fairer Lancashire Fairer Lives". The full document can be found at <http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/fairness-commission/our-report.aspx> The Executive Summary and 27 Recommendations are attached to this report.
2. The report was presented to a recent meeting of Lancashire Leaders. Councils were asked to consider it and comment on and report back on any actions they were taking in response to it.
3. Not all the recommendations are directed towards local government or district councils in particular.

4. Comments have been inserted in italics against those recommendations which do appear relevant in the sense that they relate directly to the Council's activities or to its sphere of influence. Members are invited to endorse these and to consider whether they wish to make further comments on these or any of the other recommendations in the report.

IMPLICATIONS

Policy: Where appropriate the Council's existing policy is summarised in the comments against the recommendations

Financial: Many of the recommendations would require additional funding from the Government

Legal: Some of the recommendations would require changes in legislation

Risk Management: None arising from the report

Health and Safety: None arising from the report

Sustainability: None arising from the report

Community Safety: None arising from the report

Equality and Diversity: Equality and diversity are important elements of fairness

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fairness is a complex issue that defies easy definition. While traditional concepts of equity focus on the allocation of scarce resources, a growing body of thought and evidence points to a more universal appreciation of the factors driving inequality and its consequences.

Lancashire's socio-economic diversity offers a window into this relationship between employment, health, education, housing, transport and other factors. Like the UK generally, Lancashire is home to areas of both great wealth and poverty, rural and urban communities, high-skilled workers and struggling jobseekers.

Average outcomes across the county can mask the effects of unfairness and the Commission wanted to make sure we heard from as many voices as possible to build an accurate portrayal. The evidence received by the Commission clearly demonstrates how various issues can affect individual lives and points to a more holistic, co-ordinated way of supporting people that reflects this complexity. The consequences of spending cuts, however, makes it more critical than ever that decision makers understand our communities and the pressures they face.

The Commission used the principles of the Marmot Review to examine how greater equality can help people to maximise their potential and create healthier, wealthier communities. Increasing fairness in Lancashire means making sure we help people to help themselves and free up public resources for those most in need. Our recommendations, therefore, focus on the rights we should expect from the state and our own role in building more resilient communities.

Key Findings

Starting Well

Giving every child the best start in life is crucial to reducing health inequalities and, therefore, creating the conditions for a happy adulthood where individuals can reach their potential. The advantages of wealth and class gives some children a head start in life and the impact of austerity is making it harder and harder to give poorer children the support they need to narrow the gap. Worse, the type and quality of help poorer families can expect varies from place to place. The Commission heard a lot of evidence that poorer families are struggling to cope with austerity and have experienced a fall in living standards, exemplified by the greater use of food banks and free school meals.

Failing to provide the right support at the earliest opportunity only leads to greater demand for these services in the future – with greater costs to the taxpayer and more hardship for the family in question. Professional child care has been seen as a way to reduce these disparities in development but it is clear that only quality childcare can really make a difference. Similarly, gaps in the quality of information or assessment methods mean resources can be badly invested. The “deficit model” of needs assessment should be replaced with a model of “proportionate universalism” so services are available to all children with additional, focused services targeted to those who really need them. Wider integration of public services – especially early education and local childcare – would also close some of the gaps created by income inequality.

Given the pressure on public resources, the impetus for change must come from communities themselves. “Place-based” strategies that seek to combine all of a community's assets and pool public money spent in the same area offer a way forward. Integration can also streamline and combine different services that, at present, confuse the public.

Young people reported frustration with negative media portrayals of youth issues and emphasised their need for meaningful after-school activities. Volunteering and work experience were identified

as ways to increase opportunity but many young people told us their work needs to be recognised and valued by adults for it to be truly effective as a means to a fulfilled and happy adult life.

Living Well

A fairer society would mean more people having more control over their lives. In order to achieve this, people need fairer access to education, jobs and services and their life expectancy should not be unfairly influenced by their social status or where they live in the county. The benefits of learning, working, leisure time and keeping in touch with family and friends, which many of us take for granted, are not equally accessible to everyone. Factors such as income, employment status, living and working environment all play a part in determining the health and wellbeing of people.

Welfare cuts, weak wage growth and the rising cost of essential items all put pressure on living standards and work is not necessarily a guaranteed route out of poverty. More action is needed to make work pay and this cannot take the form of benefit reductions alone. Many places in England are looking to take greater control over the local economies and see devolution as a way to achieve their policy goals. The best of these new, alternative models will retain spending within the local economy and fit with efforts to integrate services across a distinct geographic and economic area.

A common theme from respondents was the need for greater advice and support and this reflects the tremendous pressure placed on traditional systems like the Citizens Advice Bureau. At the same time, the Commission heard a great deal about the success of community advice networks that include the public in designing support services. So the challenge is implementing those models which are shown to be effective. Again, the Commission learned that many people are excluded from access because their needs do not easily match the system designed to assess them. Not fitting neatly into a bureaucratic box can leave many bereft of support. As previously suggested, universal services or “proportional universalism” (where services are offered to all with more specialised services available as an extension) could work towards alleviating these problems.

Ageing Well

Lancashire’s ageing population places more demands on public services at a time of constrained resources. At the same time, people are living longer and want to stay active in their communities or in the workforce. As people live longer, elderly people are likely to struggle with the cost of living as pension-age incomes are squeezed. Many of the Baby Boomer generation have achieved a degree of affluence unseen by previous generations but we are likely to see an increase in poverty among the elderly unless corrective action is taken. So, society faces serious challenges to adapt to these demographic and socio-economic trends.

The Commission identified several examples of niche services to the elderly which can alleviate these issues but we caution against an over-dependence on digital services as a substitute for face-to-face contact. This underlines the levels of social isolation experienced by many older people in Lancashire, which is itself exacerbated by a lack of transport, especially in rural areas. Social capital is the best method of addressing these trends and there is a real opportunity for us to use the learning and experiences of older people to teach effective “life skills” (like money management and employability skills) to younger people, combatting isolation and building stronger communities overall. Greater advice and support for older people to help themselves and make decisions about their own care can make a big difference. Society’s growing response to the emerging dementia crisis, for example, provides some good examples of how targeted information can make it easier to live happier for longer.

Recommendations

	Recommendation	Responsibility
1	We call on agencies who provide childcare in Lancashire to endeavour to raise standards: and specifically to develop ways to equip those working with young children to support parents in developing their children's early learning, especially with regard to speech and language skills.	Local Authority, Private Sector Nurseries and Childcare
2	We recommend that the Government's Welfare Reform agenda should offer additional free nursery hours incrementally based on increased hours of employment by the main caring parent.	Government
3	We recommend that options be explored to develop greater fairness in early years education, linked to the work of community groups, volunteers and the use of income generating self-sustaining activity such as the provision of affordable childcare.	Local Authority, VCFS, LEP
4	We recommend that every effort is made to raise the status and educational qualifications of those working with younger children in Lancashire. We call on Government to implement the recommendations of the independent Nutbrown Review published in July 2014 which calls for guaranteed minimum standards of provision of childcare and education.	Government, Local Authority
5	We call on OFSTED to apply consistent standards to the provision of school league tables across the country and ensure value-added information is included in all cases.	OFSTED
6	<p>We ask local authorities as far as they are able to promote the inclusion in PHSE (Physical, Social and Health Education) of a 'curriculum for life'. We also ask them, in the interests of fairness throughout society, to do all they can to promote and increase the value of vocational skills.</p> <p><i>Pendle Council works in partnership with Nelson and Colne College to provide apprenticeships to young people. The local authority is a member of the Burnley and Pendle NEET Strategy Group along with local training providers, colleges, JobCentre Plus and Young People's Service, working in partnership to promote vocational skills and reduce the numbers of young people not in employment, education or training.</i></p>	Local Authority
7	We call on Government to end public subsidies for private education by removing the charitable status of fee-paying schools.	Government
8	We recommend that individual transition plans for vulnerable children and young people should be developed and resourced to assist the move from young	Local Authority, Higher Education

	peoples to adult services.	
9	We recommend that the provision of Free Bus Passes for under 16's be explored to increase participation rates in after-school activities.	Local Authority
10	We recommend that a Lancashire Food Bank Network should be developed to share surpluses and best practice, and examine the availability and eligibility criteria of food banks, which varies significantly across Lancashire.	VCFS, Private Sector, LEP
11	<p>We recommend that local finance solutions be developed including a high-street presence for credit unions or community development finance institutions (CDFI) to increase access to affordable credit and financial advice; for individuals and growing businesses.</p> <p><i>For some time the Council has encouraged the growth of the Burnley and Pendle Credit Union which has a High Street presence in Nelson and Colne.</i></p>	Local Authority, VCFS, LEP, Financial Institutions
12	<p>We ask that central government recognises the severe and unfair impact of changes in the welfare benefits system by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing to make payments to individuals rather than one payment per family. • Continuing weekly/fortnightly rather than monthly payments; and continuing to pay Housing Benefits directly to landlords. • Granting local flexibility in the setting of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rules. • Changing the rules concerning welfare benefit sanctions to ensure that penalties are never disproportionate. • Protecting Care and Urgent Needs funding. <p><i>At the request of the portfolio holder for Partnership Services (Councillor Sakib) it is intended to bring an update report on Welfare Benefit Reforms to the September meeting and also to hold a briefing session for all Members on Universal Credit prior to the next Council meeting.</i></p>	Government
13	<p>We recommend that national Government give Lancashire control over transport planning, operations, reregulation and integration to allow them to create a more effective transport service across the North West.</p> <p><i>The current proposal for a Combined Authority for Lancashire is expected to include devolution of strategic transport. The full Council will take the decision in December 2015 whether to be a member of the Combined Authority.</i></p>	Government

14	<p>We recommend that The Lancashire County Pension Fund should be asked, within the legal constraints of its fiduciary responsibilities, to develop responsible investment within its portfolio and seek to shift a proportion of the fund to the local economy including investment in renewable energy and affordable housing.</p>	Lancashire County Pension Fund
15	<p>We recommend an increase in the number of public sector bodies signing-up to energy collaboration initiatives, drawing on local best practice and the Association for Public Sector Excellence's (APSE) national community energy partnership (www.apse.org.uk)</p>	VCFS, Private Sector, LEP, District Councils
16	<p>We call on our MPs to support the development and enforcement of mandatory standards to address quality, health affordability and sustainability in the private and social rented housing sectors.</p> <p><i>The Government is currently undertaking a consultation exercise around enforcement in the Private Rented Sector (PRS) which coupled with the enforcement regime in the Housing Act 2004 will lead to an improvement of standards in the PRS. There are changes coming into force later this year to improve the enforcement of smoke and Carbon Monoxide detection in rented properties and a mandatory standard is being introduced from 2016 on the minimum energy rating in properties for rent.</i></p>	Lancashire MPs
17	<p>We recommend that city and borough councils ensure that all requirements for the provision of affordable housing as part of any new building application are given full legal protection. We further call on relevant stakeholders to pledge that all housing developments will contain a minimum of 30% of dwellings classed as "affordable".</p> <p><i>In the Council's Core Strategy, Policy LIV4 Affordable Housing seeks to maximise the delivery of affordable housing consistent with the requirements set out in national planning policy, taking account of the viability of individual development proposals.</i></p>	Local Authority, Public Sector
18	<p>We recommend that local authorities and other housing bodies across Lancashire establish a not-for-profit lettings agency to smooth the homelessness-to-lettings process, reduce costs for renters and improve private sector standards.</p> <p><i>The Council works closely with housing providers to seek to avoid evictions and secure rehousing for homeless households. The development of a not-for-profit lettings agency will aid this process, reduce costs for renters and the Council, whilst acting as a driver to improve private sector standards.</i></p>	Local Authority, Housing Associations
19	<p>Low energy homes can reduce energy costs, as well as</p>	Local Authority, LEP, Private

	<p>tackling climate change. To address fairness now and into the future through the provision of good sustainable housing, we ask the public sector, Lancashire Enterprise Partnership, and the industry to work together to promote new technological solutions to sustainable building design, with clear industry standards linked to good training and apprenticeships.</p> <p><i>In the Council’s Core Strategy, Policy LIV5 Designing Better Places to Live seeks to increase the energy efficiency of new dwellings, reduce CO₂ emissions and help to adapt to climate change. This policy has strong linkages with Policy ENV2 Achieving Quality in Design and Conservation which addresses design for climate change mitigation and adaptation and encourages new development to move towards a low carbon future by improving energy efficiency and/or generating heat and power from renewable and low carbon sources.</i></p>	Sector
20	<p>We recommend the introduction of a national system of index-linked rent controls to be triggered wherever rents price people out of housing. We call on our MPs to back campaigns for adequate affordable rented accommodation (by organisations such as www.generationrent.org).</p> <p><i>Private sector rents are market-led. In some parts of the borough, rents may be set at a level that requires the renter to have substantial income. However, in other parts of the borough, rents remain relatively affordable and comparable to Registered Provider rents. A national system of rent controls which allows greater access to affordable rented accommodation will widen the choice for renters in Pendle.</i></p>	Local Authority, VCFS, Private Sector, Schools
21	<p>We recommend an increase in the number of sustainable locally-led community projects such as community food growing, co-operatives and ‘grow, cook and eat’ projects to produce, distribute and share quality, healthy food.</p> <p><i>The Council through the Leisure Trust has encouraged such projects. The Environmental Health Service provides advice for the public on healthy eating.</i></p>	Local Authority, VCFS, Private Sector, Schools
22	<p>We recommend a campaign to promote the Living Wage to all employers focused initially on public sector “anchor institutions” with a vested interest in their communities (councils, universities, colleges, police, NHS) and include work to end zero hour contracts.</p> <p><i>The following is an extract from the Council’s current Pay Policy Statement: The Council will endeavour to ensure that no employee is paid less than the National Living Wage, currently £7.85 per hour. The lowest paid persons employed under a contract of employment with the Council are employed in accordance</i></p>	Public Sector, LEP, Universities

	<p><i>with the National Joint Council spinal column point currently in use within the Council's grading structure that is equivalent to the National Living Wage.</i></p> <p><i>The Council has no zero hour contracts.</i></p>	
23	<p>We recommend the creation of an Older People's Charter: All partners in Lancashire should sign up to developing and implementing an older people's charter (by, for example, adapting existing charters, eg: Hyndburn Borough Council, Age UK) which recognises:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That because people are now living longer, there is now both a third age (characterised by plenty of time, energy and relatively good health when retired) and a fourth age, mainly those in entering their 80s (with poorer health, limited mobility and a need of increased support). • The skills and experience acquired by older people and a commitment to utilise these in communities and volunteering opportunities across all sectors. • That older people are looking for engagement in arts, education, leisure and new technologies. <p><i>The Council has an Older People's Plan 2012-15 which will be brought forward for refresh in due course.</i></p> <p><i>The Council has an Older People and Dementia Member Champion (Councillor Whalley).</i></p>	Local Authority, VCFS, NHS
24	<p>We recommend access to alternative transport where public and private services are no longer accessible, affordable or operating when appropriate. Public sector organisations should invest more in community bus schemes.</p> <p><i>Members may recall that the Council used to operate its own community transport scheme but some years ago this was absorbed into the County Council's service.</i></p>	Local Authority, Public Sector, VCFS
25	<p>We recommend that all sectors must take a considered approach towards digitalisation and digital inclusion to counteract isolation and to support independent living. This can be achieved by ensuring that technological support is given to older people who wish to be involved in digitalisation, but also supporting those who do not by preventing services commonly used by older people from becoming wholly digitalised.</p> <p><i>In the Council's Core Strategy, Policy WRK1 Strengthening the Local Economy supports transformation of the rural economy by focussing on knowledge-based businesses and the competitive advantages that can be gained through the application of knowledge via a process of managed change and restructuring. The delivery of Superfast Lancashire – a collaboration between</i></p>	VCFS, Public and Private Sectors, District Councils

	<p><i>Lancashire County Council and BT – to bring fibre broadband to 97% of homes and businesses in the county by the end of 2015 is a key to the successful delivery of this objective.</i></p> <p><i>The Council is represented on a Lancashire-wide Digital Inclusion Forum: Go On Lancashire Steering Group. The Council’s Customer Access Management Strategy is currently in draft form with an accompanying Impact Assessment which considers the needs of older people within it.</i></p>	
26	<p>We recommend that universal high standards of care for older people should be available to all. These high standards can best be achieved by a society what values their carers and would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuity of care within each setting • Flexible access for family members and friends to visit • Strategies for promoting each resident’s voice such as advocacy or family input; choice; and zero tolerance for poor care. <p><i>The Council’s Health and Social Care Scrutiny panel has undertaken a number of reviews of care provision.</i></p>	Government, Public Sector, VCFS, Private Sector
27	<p>Dementia will affect an increasing number of our population as life expectancy increases, and this commission is concerned about the current lack of insight the communities have into this condition. It is proposed that this situation be improved by: engaging and informing our wider communities, including support for the work of Alzheimer’s UK’s scheme of Dementia Friends and Dementia Champion training; and promoting dementia-friendly communities within libraries, community centres, art and cultural venues, churches, etc.</p> <p><i>The Council is a Dementia Friendly organisation and has provided advice and training for its staff on how to recognise and handle dementia both at work and in their personal life.</i></p> <p><i>The Council has an Older People and Dementia Member Champion (Councillor Whalley).</i></p>	Public Sector, VCFS