

Appendix Seven: Demonstrating Engagement

This appendix describes how key stakeholders have been engaged and involved in the initial development of the Council's new financial inclusion strategy and programme between November 2012 and March 2013.

Engagement was undertaken through a brief but focussed and inclusive exercise building on the work of the City's Advice Partnership.

In general terms the work has followed the council's commissioning approach including partnership engagement, evidence based decision making, stakeholder participation and needs assessment. Most importantly, the work has had a focus on action through co-production.

Public Engagement

Due to the nature and pace of the financial inclusion work direct engagement with the public was not undertaken. However, the programme drew from various public engagement events led by the Advice Partnership as well as reviewing engagement data as part of the needs assessment process. Furthermore, the commissioner for financial inclusion attended front line advice meetings in order to hear directly about the experiences of financially excluded residents.

Advice Partnership

The Advice Partnership is a sub-group of the 2020 Community Partnership tasked with the responsibility of coordinating and developing advice provision in the city. It has been working on financial inclusion as a key component of this in response to the Government's welfare reform and public sector funding programmes.

The proposed approach to financial inclusion was presented to the advice Partnership in November 2012 and agreement was achieved. In order that specialist engagement and voice could be achieved, the partnership set up a short life financial inclusion reference group. In addition, Advice Partnership members have been present at many of the financial inclusion planning meetings and the full strategy will be shared with them prior to the Policy and Resources Committee.

Reference Group

The partnership's reference group was open to all community and voluntary sector Advice Partnership members to ensure a balanced membership that brought together expertise and experience across the spectrum of financial inclusion issues and services including:

- Debt and Money Advice Provision
- Community Banking
- Financial Capability and Education
- Food and Fuel Poverty
- Digital Inclusion

Its purpose was to offer general advice to the Financial Inclusion Board on the shape and direction of programme and to provide expert technical advice where helpful, in particular with regard to the emerging commissioning strategy.

This group have met twice during this period and have also received information via email circulation lists. At its second meeting the group reviewed the proposed strategy documents through the facilitation of Toynbee Hall as independent experts.

Engagement Event

In order to increase the reach of stakeholder participation an engagement event, facilitated by Toynbee Hall, was held on 29 January 2013. Publicity and invitation to this was circulated widely through established networks such as those operated by the Brighton and Hove Community and Voluntary Sector Forum (CVSF) and the Advice Services Network. In addition, council officers contacted organisations representing groups most at risk of financial inclusion such as those supporting Black and Minority Ethnic communities and disabled people. Contact was also made with faith based organisations and the Refugee and Migrant Forum. Over 65 people attended on the day and actively participated in the development of the implementation plans as well as the wider strategy.

The event was evaluated as a huge success and a report of the day was quickly produced by Toynbee Hall. Its findings will directly feed into the contents of the Strategy and action plans.

Needs Assessment

A draft needs assessment was developed in December 2012 through the use of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) template and then circulated widely across the City. The draft was also formally tabled at meetings of the Advice Partnership, Financial Inclusion Board, Social Landlords Forum and Financial Inclusion Reference Group. As a result many responses were received which have been incorporated into the final version.

Toynbee Hall

Toynbee Hall are a leading national financial inclusion charity with a sound reputation in the sector. They work at both a national and local level and are involved in helping to shape financial inclusion policy and practice at central and local government.

They were invited to act as 'critical friends' to the council's work and have given expert feedback at a number of key points in the programme as well as facilitating key meetings. Furthermore the organisation has helped to 'quality assure' the financial inclusion strategy and associated plans and will help the council to address its own financial inclusion practice as part of organisational change.

City Council Members

The Head of Policy, Performance and Analysis has attended meetings with representatives from all three parties to ensure they have been kept fully up to date with progress. Feedback from these meetings has been included in the development of the Strategy.

Executive Board

A virtual programme management board comprising the Executive Director of Finance and Resources and Head of Policy, Performance and Analysis, with support from the Commissioner for Financial Inclusion and Project Manager was established at the beginning of the process.

Its purpose was to retain decision making responsibility with regard to the Financial Inclusion Programme taking into account information and recommendations from the other governance groups. The executive board was also responsible for escalating issues to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Member groups where appropriate. Ultimately the Director of Finance and Resources will present the Financial Inclusion Strategy as a report to Policy and Resources Committee in March 2013.

Financial Inclusion Board

The Financial Inclusion Board (FIB) was established as the key governance mechanism for the programme. Membership included key council services including Housing, Adult Social Care, Stronger Families Stronger Communities and City Services (providing link to Welfare Reform Programme). Key support services such as finance and procurement were also in attendance. In order to ensure representation and involvement, the council requested a formal representative from the Community and Voluntary Sector Forum, Advice Partnership and Job Centre Plus.

In general terms its purpose was to oversee, coordinate and integrate the council's new work around financial inclusion.

Commissioners Working Group

The Commissioners Working Group was established to bring together key commissioners working on social exclusion issues. Comprised of council officers from children's services, fuel poverty, adult education, adult social care, public health, housing, procurement and welfare rights the group contributed to the needs assessment and mapping as well as strategy and commissioning plans. Members of the group also took the FI work to their own meetings and forums which offered an additional level of engagement and consultation.

Consultation Meetings

A number of detailed meetings were undertaken during the preparation of the Strategy with both internal and external stakeholders. These included meetings with the council's welfare rights unit and its premises team in relation to the idea of an advice hub. In addition, discussions were held with

organisations such as the Credit Union and local banks with regard to the community banking partnership approach.

Broader Consultation and Engagement

The council has sought to be transparent in this work by circulating copies of draft documents for comment wherever possible. The involvement of a CVSF representative and the Advice Partnership has ensured that email dialogue has been possible with organisations not able to attend events. Furthermore the commissioner has raised issues of financial exclusion with key equality organisations already working in partnership with the Communities and Equality Team. This has included engaged with neighbourhood community development partners.