York: Human Rights City

York Human Rights City Network Indicator Report

HUMAN RIGHTS IN YORK: THE STATE OF THE CITY

#9, 2024

YORK HUMAN RIGHTS CITY DECLARATION

York, in becoming a Human Rights City, embraces a vision of a vibrant, diverse, fair and safe community built on the foundations of universal human rights. This vision is shared by citizens and institutions in our city, including the City Council, North Yorkshire Police, voluntary organisations and faith communities.

We are building on York's own particular history of democratic innovation, philanthropy and an international outlook, all of which have shaped our commitment to social justice.

This declaration marks an ambition, a significant point in a journey, not a final destination. As the United Kingdom's first Human Rights City we are committed to making our vision real, putting fundamental rights at the heart of our policies, hopes and dreams for the future.

Signed by:
The Right Honourable Lord Mayor of York
at the declaration event at the Merchant Taylors' Hall,
on Monday 24th April 2017

Acknowledgements

This report was written by Fionn Toland, with sections contributed by Marije Davidson, Carrie Wheater, Alison Semmence, Laurie Smith and Sue Royston. The Human Rights City Network is grateful to all those who participated in the preparation of the report.

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INTRODUCTION

2024 has been another difficult year for many individuals and families in York. Whilst recent inflationary pressures may have eased, the impact of years of austerity continues to be felt across the city.

This impact is reflected in our human rights indicators. For example, the city continues to see high levels of foodbank use, and declining healthy life expectancy. The indicators highlight other areas of inequality that exist within York, including a large gender pay gap, which has been an issue for a number of years, and a worrying number of reported hate crimes.

The impact of austerity is being felt not just by individuals but by many organisations that are central to ensuring the rights of York's residents are protected. York's voluntary, community, and social enterprise sector provides various supports and services to the city's most vulnerable residents. It is concerning therefore, to hear the results of a survey of these organisations, carried out by the York Centre for Voluntary Services (CVS). According to York CVS, one third of the organisations surveyed stated that they would be in budget deficit in the 2024/25 financial year.[1] Almost one in five stated that they envisaged having to cut services in the next year, whilst over half would have to dip into their financial reserves in order to maintain current services. Organisations reported increased demand for their services at a time when government funding was drying up or failing to keep pace with inflation.

While the city faces many challenges, significant efforts continue to be made to protect the human rights of York's residents, some of which we highlight in our report. For example, we discuss the various projects that have been taking place around the city designed to reduce loneliness and social isolation. Further, we consider the Council's new homelessness and rough sleeping strategy. The strategy will utilise a Housing First approach, something that we advocated for in our 2018 Indicator Report.[2]

We, at the York Human Rights City Network (YHRCN), have continued our efforts to ensure that human rights are a central point of focus in the city, including through our bi-monthly steering group meetings. Our volunteers supported York Disability Week, York International Women's Week, and York Disability Rights Forum, and we continued to keep our mailing list updated with information about events of interest through our weekly emails. YHRCN is represented on the Inclusive Equal Rights' York Anti-Racism Strategic Taskforce, launched in January 2024 by the Archbishop of York at Bishopthorpe Palace. We also play an active role in the York Hate Crime Partnership.

During the year, we received presentations from University of York MA students on *Disability Hate Crime in York*, and on *Children's Rights in York* – both informative reports which influenced our advocacy work. We were pleased to take part in the event, organised by York CVS in April 2024, to mark the achievements of the York Poverty Truth Commission, which completed its work earlier in the year.

We also continued to work with the City Council, and other organisations, through the Human Rights and Equalities Board (HREB). HREB was re-launched in April 2024, with the YHRCN nominating Paul Gready to act as Co-Chair. The Board met regularly in 2024. Its activities included discussing and seeking feedback on Indicator Report recommendations; reviewing work being carried out on a new Human Rights and Equalities Impact Analysis tool; and assessing progress on issues relating to particular groups in the city (Gypsy and Traveller, Anti-Racism, Social Model of Disability, Equalities Strategy). In 2025, HREB aims to address one substantive human rights issue in the city, such as child rights and poverty, at each of its meetings.

In our 2024 Human Rights Indicator Report, our ninth annual report, we aim to shed light on the extent to which the city is protecting human rights in York. As always there are positive trends and areas of concern. A summary of our indicators and the most recent findings are set out in the following section.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Right to Equality and Non-Discrimination

- Indicator – Hate Crime
  - The number of hate crimes reported in the city rose from 374 to 416.
- Indicator – Gender Pay Gap
  - The gender pay gap in York increased from 20.2% to 22.6%.

2. The Right to Education

- Indicator – Proportion of 16–17-Year-Olds Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs)
  - The proportion of young people not in education, employment or training increased from 0.8% to 1.4%.
- Indicator – Percentage Gap in Achievement Between Disadvantaged Pupils and Their Peers in Reading, Writing and Maths (End of Key Stage 2: Aged 10-11) – Disadvantage Gap.
  - The gap in educational attainment between disadvantaged students and their peers at the end of primary education increased in 2024 from 26% to 28.9%.

3. The Right to Health and Social Care

- Indicator – Proportion of Service Users Who Have as Much Social Contact as They Would Like.
  - At the time of writing the figures for this indicator had not yet been published.
- Indicator – Life Expectancy and Healthy Life Expectancy.
  - Life expectancy for men in York rose in 2024, from 79.47 years to 79.77 years.
  - Life expectancy for women in York rose from 83.37 years to 83.61 years.
  - Healthy life expectancy for men in York decreased from 63.61 years to 62.01 years.
  - Healthy life expectancy for women in York decreased from 64.08 years to 62.68 years.

4. The Right to Housing

- Indicator – Statutory Homelessness
  - The number of people assessed for homelessness by the Council was 763. Due to incomplete data for previous years, we cannot make a comparison.

- Indicator – Rough Sleeper Count
  - The number of people found to be sleeping rough on a single night in York in 2024 was 15, up from nine in the previous year.
- Indicator – Households and Children Living in Temporary Accommodation
  - The average number of households living in temporary accommodation in York rose from 63 to 68.
  - The average number of children living in temporary accommodation in York decreased from 59 to 43.

5. The Right to a Decent Standard of Living

- Indicator – Child Poverty
  - The percentage of York's children living in poverty fell from 19.3% to 17.9%.
- Indicator – Foodbank Use
  - The number of food vouchers fulfilled by the York Foodbank rose in 2024 from 2,820 to 2,874.
- Indicator – Earnings Gap
  - The gap in earnings between those on low wages and those on median wages grew from £153.20 to £180.20.
- Indicator – Universal Credit
  - The total number of Universal Credit claimants rose from 12,156 in 2023 to 13,714 in 2024.
  - The number of out-of-work benefits claimants rose from 2,160 to 2,585.

Our report also contains several case studies, which document some of the activities being carried out in York to protect human rights.

- Marije Davidson, from the York Disability Rights Forum, writes about initiatives to improve the reporting of disability hate crime.
- Carrie Wheater, from Refugee Action York, documents the work being done by the organisation to ensure that refugee children in the city can access education.
- Alison Semmence, from the York Centre for Voluntary Service, details the social prescribing efforts that have been taking place in the city.
- The work of the Lowfield Community Housing Co-operative is written about by Laurie Smith of YorSpace.
- Sue Royston, from Citizens' Advice York, sets out the organisation's concerns regarding proposed changes to the Work Capabilities Assessment for people who are sick or disabled.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Gender Pay Gap

Over the past few years, we have highlighted the significant gender pay gap in York. In last year's report, we called for increased efforts to address this issue, as well as other workplace inequalities in York, such as ethnicity and disability pay gaps.

In order to begin to tackle these inequalities, it is important to understand the reasons why they exist. Whilst a City Council report from February 2025 suggested several contributing factors to the gender pay gap,[3] including unfair pay practices and the uneven distribution of part-time employment in the city, we believe it would be beneficial if research were carried out to better understand the reasons behind the gap so that strategies can be developed to reduce it.

We therefore recommend that the Human Rights and Equalities Board press for research to be carried out, which seeks to identify the specific factors behind the gender pay gap in York.

We also recommend that the Council, statutory bodies, and other employers in the city publish data on additional pay gaps, for example, relating to race and disability, as well as data that sheds light on intersectional inequalities.

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

In our report, we monitor the average number of households and the average number of children that are living in temporary accommodation in York. We believe it would also be useful to know how much time people are spending in this type of housing. This is especially the case given that the Council's new Housing First approach to homelessness and rough sleeping focuses on reducing the time people spend in temporary accommodation.

We therefore recommend that the City of York Council publish statistics on the York Open Data website regarding the average time that households and children are spending in temporary accommodation in York.

Perceptions of Human Rights in York

In 2017, York declared its commitment to ensuring that the fundamental human rights of its residents are protected. That commitment placed an obligation on the city's institutions to take account of human rights in their policies and actions. It also encouraged residents to respect the human rights of others in the city. With nearly eight years having passed since York was declared a Human Rights City, we would like to take the opportunity to explore how residents of York understand human rights. This would help us in our future efforts to ensure that the opinions of those who live and work in York are prioritised when considering how best to protect human rights in the city.

We therefore recommend that the Human Rights and Equalities Board, in consultation with the York Human Rights City Network, investigate ways to gauge residents' understanding of human rights and their practical application in York.

Healthy Life Expectancy

In last year's report, we noted the significant differences in healthy life expectancy between wards in York. In its Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2032, the City of York Council has prioritised reducing this gap between the richest and poorest communities in the city. We want to know what organisations within the city, through their policies and actions, can contribute to improving this situation.

We therefore recommend that the Human Rights and Equalities Board bring together organisations to discuss how human rights-informed approaches can contribute to making York a healthier city and to reducing the gap in healthy life expectancy between the richest and poorest communities in York.

In next year's report, we will publish responses, and non-responses, to these recommendations from relevant actors in the city.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

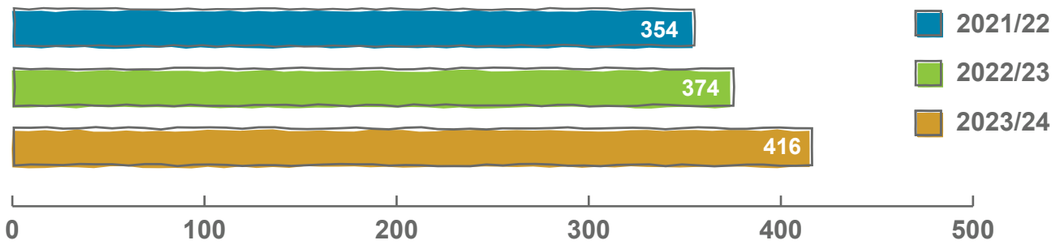
The Right

International Law	Domestic Law
International Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination European Convention on Human Rights, 1950, Article 14 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966, Articles 2.1 and 26 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966, Articles 2.2, 3, 7.a.i, 10.3 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006, Articles 4, 5, 6, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30	Human Rights Act 1998, Schedule 1, Part 1, Article 14 (the Human Rights Act domesticates the European Convention on Human Rights) Equality Act 2010, Section 149

The Indicators

Hate Crimes Recorded

Graph 1: Hate Crimes Recorded in York (Source: North Yorkshire Police)



The statistics for the number of recorded hate crimes are provided by North Yorkshire Police. They cover the period from November 1st 2023 until October 31st 2024. In last year's report, we noted that 374 hate crimes had been recorded in York in the previous 12-month period. In 2024, that number increased to 416 (Graph 1).[4] That's an 11.2% increase and this is the second year in a row that the number has risen.

Racially motivated hate crimes have been the most common type in York over the past number of years. In 2024, such hate crimes increased, both in terms of the number committed, and as a proportion of the total hate crimes committed in the city. There were 291 hate crimes solely involving race, and a further 14 had a racial element. This means that 305, or 73.3% of the hate crimes reported involved race. That's up from the previous year, when 208, or 55.1% of the total hate crimes recorded, involved a racial element.

The next highest motivating factor was homophobia, which was present in 76 of the hate crimes recorded, or 18.3%. That's down from 98, or 26.2% in 2023. The third highest motivating factor was disability, which was involved in 27 of the recorded hate crimes. That's 6.5% of the total hate crimes recorded, down from 45, or 12.3% in 2023.

In our case study (see below), Marije Davidson of the York Disability Rights Forum discusses efforts to improve the reporting of disability hate crime. As we have noted in previous reports, there are likely to have been a significant amount of hate crimes committed in the city that have gone unreported. This may explain why there were no reported hate crimes involving religion or belief in the latest 12-month period.

Table 1: Areas with Highest Number of Reported Hate Crimes
(Source: York Open Data)

Ward	No. of Reports
Guildhall	125 (30%)
Micklegate	66 (15.9%)
Westfield	27 (6.5%)

Table 2: Percentage of Residents Who Perceive Hate Crime to be a Problem in Their Ward
(Source: York Open Data)

Ward	% of Residents Who Perceive Hate Crime to be a Problem in Their Ward
York	19.9%
Guildhall	33.3%
Micklegate	23.3%
Westfield	16.6%

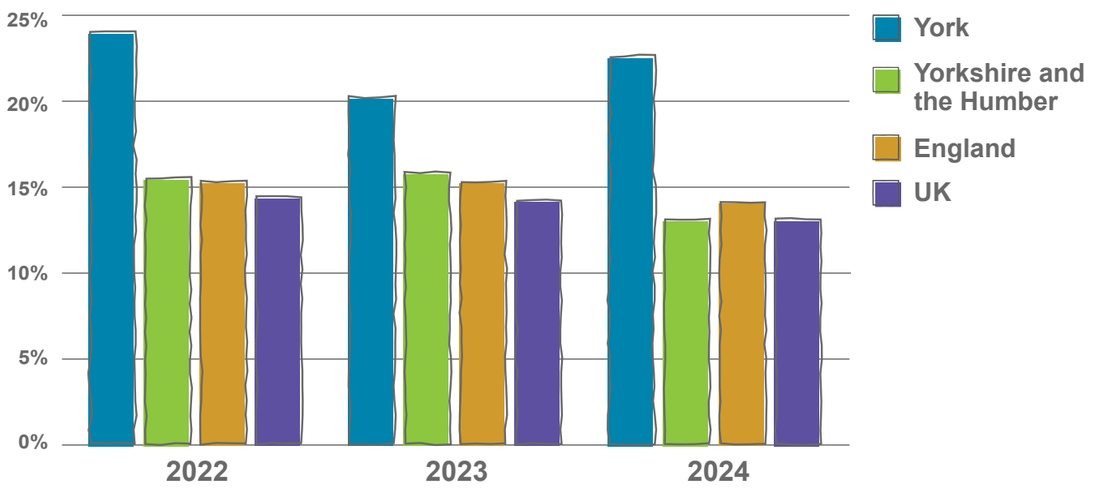
If we look at the ward breakdown for 2024 (Table 1), we see that 30% of hate crimes recorded were carried out in the Guildhall area, 15.9% in Micklegate, and 6.5% in Westfield.[5] These three areas also had the largest amount of hate crimes reported in the city in 2023.

The City Council tracks the percentage of residents in each ward who believe that hate crime is an issue in their area.[6] In 2024, on average, 19.9% of York's residents thought that hate crime was a problem in their ward (Table 2). In Guildhall, which regularly has the largest number of recorded hate crimes in the city, 33.3% of residents felt hate crime was an issue, well above the average. In Micklegate, where a significant number of hate crimes are also regularly recorded, 23.3% of residents thought it was an issue – again, above the average. However, only 16.6% of residents in Westfield felt that hate crime was a problem in their area, despite the ward consistently having high rates of these crimes.

Gender Pay Gap

Our report relies on the Office for National Statistics' definition of the gender pay gap. It measures the difference between the average hourly earnings of men and women, as a percentage of the average hourly

Graph 2: Gender Pay Gap – The Difference Between the Average, Hourly Earnings of Men and Women, as a Percentage of the Average Hourly Earnings of Men – Full-Time and Part-Time Work Combined
(Source: Office For National Statistics)



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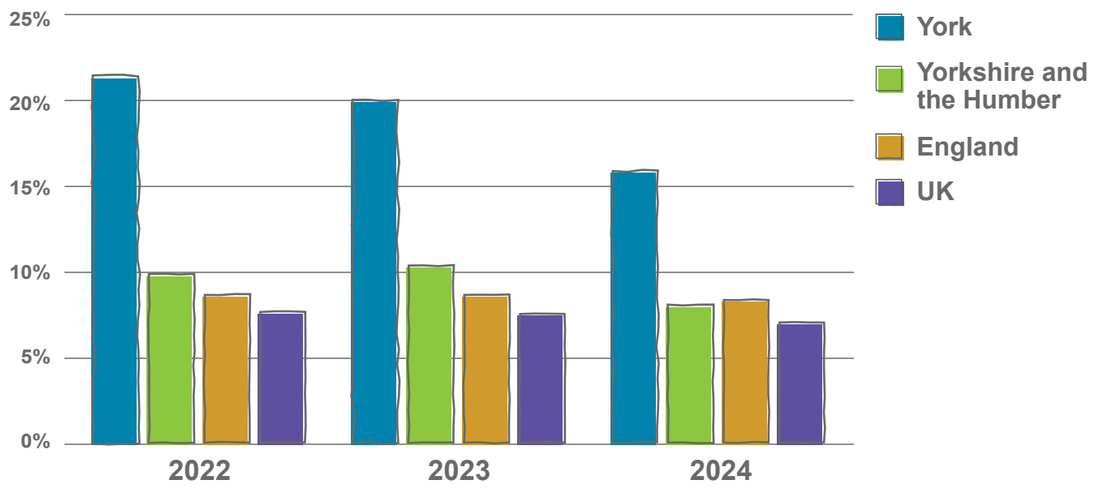
earnings of men. Graph 2 shows the gender pay gap for full-time work and part-time work combined.[7] These figures are influenced by three factors. First, the pay gap that exists between men and women who are in full-time work; second, the gap between men and women working part-time; and third, the proportion of men and women working in full-time or part-time roles. If a larger proportion of women are working in part-time roles, which tend to be paid at a lower hourly rate than full-time positions, the overall income of women will be lower, and therefore the gender pay gap will be wider.

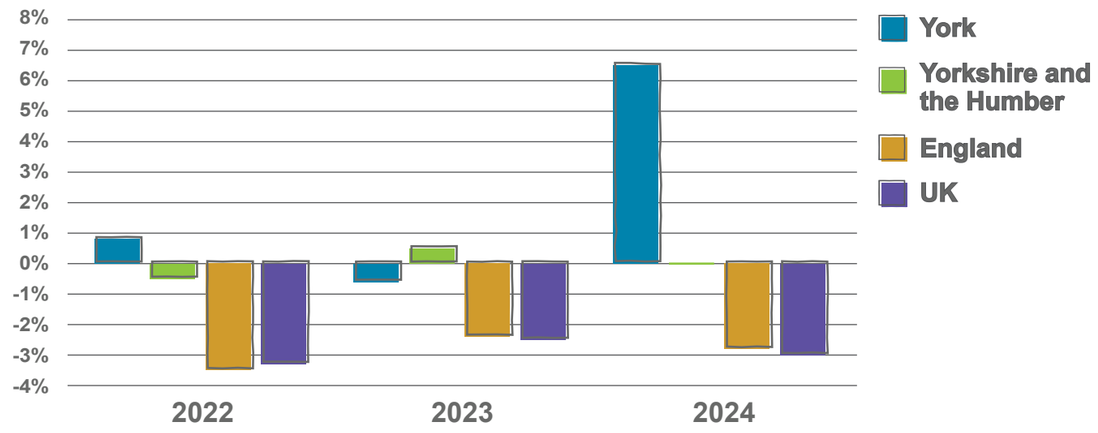
In recent years, the figure for York has been well above regional and national averages, although 2023 saw a relatively significant decrease to 20.2% from 24% in 2022. Disappointingly, 2024 saw the figure rise to 22.6%. That's an 11.9% increase. However, since 2022, there has still been a 5.8% decrease in the gap. In 2024, the gap in York was 9.5 percentage points higher than Yorkshire and the Humber, 8.5 percentage points higher than England, and 9.5 percentage points higher than the UK average.[8]

The Office for National Statistics not only gives the gender pay gap for full-time and part-time work combined, but also for each separately, giving us further insight into the trends in York.

Graph 3: Gender Pay Gap – The Difference Between the Average, Hourly Earnings of Men and Women, as a Percentage of the Average Hourly Earnings of Men – Full-Time Work
(Source: Office For National Statistics)



Graph 4: Gender Pay Gap – The Difference Between the Average, Hourly Earnings of Men and Women, as a Percentage of the Average Hourly Earnings of Men – Part-Time Work
(Source: Office for National Statistics)



Graph 3 shows the gender pay gap for full-time work only. In our 2023 report, we noted a slight reduction in the gap, which had fallen from 21.3% to 19.9%.[9] 2024 saw a more significant reduction, with the figure falling to 15.8%. That is a drop of 4.1 percentage points which is a 20.6% decrease. Since 2022, when the gender pay gap in York was almost three times the UK average, there has been a 25.8% decrease in the figure. However, the gap is still double that of the United Kingdom as a whole.

The figure for part-time work helps to explain why there was an overall increase in the gender pay gap in York in 2024. In the previous year, York had a gender pay gap for part-time work of minus .6%, meaning that, on average, women in York were getting paid at a slightly better rate than men for such work (Graph 4).[10] However, 2024 saw a significant shift in the opposite direction, with men, on average, earning 6.5% more than their female counterparts. The reason for this shift is not clear. It could be the result of a significant number of men entering higher paid part-time roles, or because of industries with a larger proportion of men who work part-time seeing significant pay increases.

CASE STUDY: The Role of Third-Party Organisations in Disability Hate Crime Reporting

This year we invited Marije Davidson of the York Disability Rights Forum (YDRF) to write about the role of third-party organisations in reporting disability related hate crimes.

Disability hate crime is significantly under-reported nationally, including in York. In a 12-month period between November 1st 2024 and October 31st 2024, North Yorkshire Police recorded 25 reports of disability hate crime in the city.[11] Increased reporting would provide authorities and civil society with insight into the lived reality for disabled people and help develop better support and targeted interventions to stop disability hate crime.

YDRF believes that statutory, voluntary and private sector organisations that provide services to the local community, particularly disabled people, are well-positioned to increase reporting of disability hate crime.[12] However, we know very little about how they can be supported in this role.

In 2023, YDRF and the York Hate Crime Partnership[13] invited postgraduate students at the Centre

for Applied Human Rights, University of York, to conduct research to fill this knowledge gap and to make recommendations to increase reporting of disability hate crime and disability hate incidents in York.[14]

Their research led to the following findings:

- Many participants demonstrated some understanding of the social model of disability and recognised the value of human-rights based approaches. However, the students found an over-reliance on the safeguarding framework. Anyone who works with disabled adults who have care or support needs has a statutory responsibility to report any concerns to social services if they suspect that the disabled adult experiences or is at risk of abuse or neglect, and the adult is unable to protect themselves. This promotes a care-focused approach and organisations were less likely to consider supporting disabled people to report hate crime to the police.
- Organisations do not receive adequate hate crime training, and hate crime is not adequately covered in safeguarding training.
- Awareness of what constitutes a disability hate crime amongst disabled people and the general public is low.
- Disability hate crime law is not as strong as other hate crime legislation, and disabled people are under-represented in the infrastructure dealing with hate crime.
- Public transport was identified as a hotspot for disability hate crime.
- Barriers to third party mechanisms for reporting disability hate crime include:
  - Heavy reliance on the safeguarding framework alone.
  - Lack of capacity due to chronic underfunding.
  - Lack of trust in the police.

"Increased reporting would provide authorities and civil society with insight into the lived reality for disabled people and help develop better support and targeted interventions to stop disability hate crime."

In response to the findings and recommendations, a Multi-Agency Action Plan covering York and North Yorkshire has been developed by YDRF, the City of York Council Community Safety Manager, the North Yorkshire Council Principal Safer Communities Officer, and the North Yorkshire Police hate crime team. The delivery of the plan is overseen by the York Hate Crime Partnership.

The Plan sets out actions in six areas:

- Build capacity of organisations to support hate crime reporting through hate crime champions, training, and maintaining minimum standards. The North Yorkshire Police and the City of York Council are exploring a new online mechanism to report hate crime.
- Increase representation of disabled people amongst a network of hate crime champions which is being piloted by North Yorkshire Police.
- Promote disability equity and accessibility of hate crime support services, including accessible information.
- Increase the understanding of how disability hate crime intersects with safeguarding – Ensure that information about hate crimes, the social model of disability, and human rights is embedded in safeguarding training.
- Raise public awareness of disability hate crime, its impact, and the importance of reporting it.
- Increase safety of disabled bus passengers by working with York Enhanced Bus Partnership Forum.

The report and a summary can be accessed on the YDRF website.[15]

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EDUCATION

The Right

International Law	Domestic Law
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966, Article 13 Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, Article 28	Human Rights Act 1998, Schedule 1, Part 2, Article 2 Equality Act 2010, Part 6, Chapter 1, Section 85 Education Act 1996, Section 13 Education and Skills Act 2008, Part 1, Chapter 1

The Indicators

Proportion of 16–17-Year-Olds Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs)

The proportion of 16-17-year-olds not in education, employment or training (the NEET rate) is now relatively

Graph 5: Proportion of 16–17-Year-Olds Not in Education, Employment or Training (Source: York Open Data)

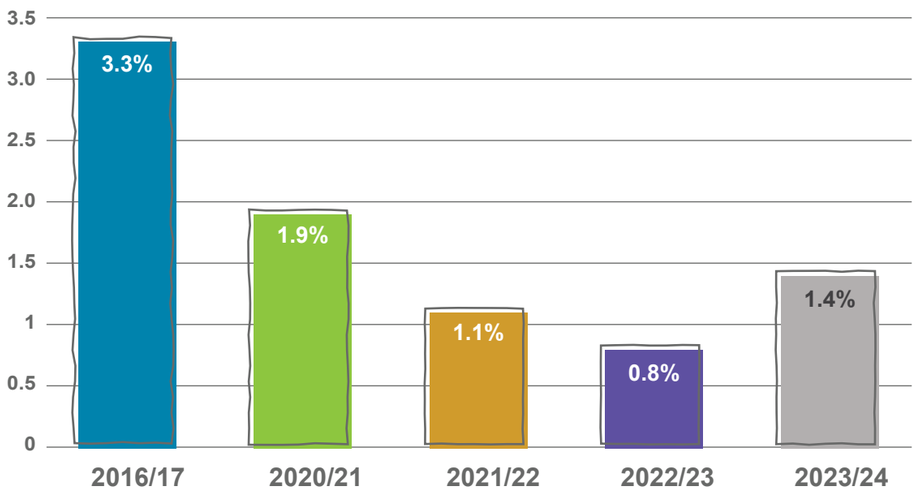


Table 3: Proportion of 16-17-Year-Olds Not in Education, Employment or Training – Comparison (Source: Office for National Statistics)

	Proportion of 16–17-year-olds not in education, employment or training – December 2022
York	0.7%
Yorkshire and the Humber	3.3%
England	2.8%

low in York, having decreased over the past number of years. At the end of 2022/23, the figure in York was 0.8% (Graph 5).[16] This rose slightly in 2023/24 to 1.4%, which equates to 51 people out of a total of around 3,600. Since 2016/17, when the figure was 3.3%, there has been a 57.6% decrease in the NEET rate.

If we compare the figure for York with that of other benchmarks, we can see that the city has performed comparatively well (Table 3).[17] Using ONS data from the end of the 2022 calendar year we can see that the NEET rate in York was 0.7%. This was compared to 3.3% for Yorkshire and the Humber as a whole and 2.8% for England.

The Youth Futures Foundation, an independent non-profit organisation which aims to improve employment outcomes for young people from marginalised backgrounds, has commented on the broader picture regarding youth employment in the United Kingdom. In a 2024 report, the organisation examined recent national figures for *16-24-year-olds* not in education, employment or training, a broader cohort than that covered by our indicator.[18] It noted that after peaking in 2011 at 16.9%, the NEET rate for this group steadily declined and had dropped to below 10% in 2021.[19] However, since the pandemic the number has been increasing, reaching 12.2%, or 872,000 young people, in 2024.

The foundation's report notes that the NEET rate is higher for young men (13.5%), than young women (10.8%). Further, it highlights disparities regarding ethnic backgrounds. The NEET rate for young people who are White British is 10.9%, but is 13.9% for those from Pakistani backgrounds, and 25% for those from Black Caribbean backgrounds. The report also highlighted that NEET rates are higher amongst those with experience of the care system and those with Special Educational Needs and disabilities.[20]

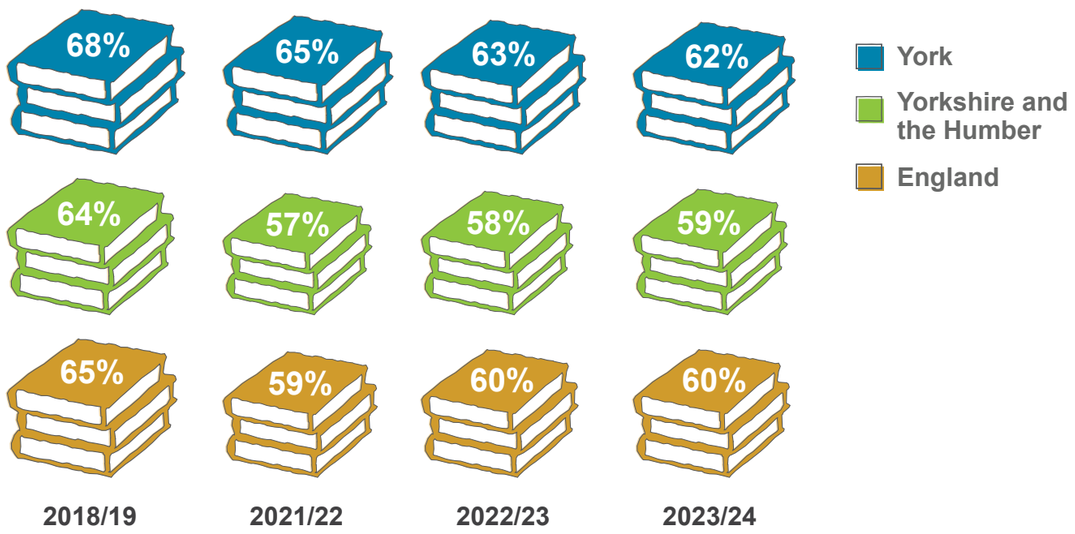
The foundation called for greater efforts to be made to ensure that young people from marginalised groups are prepared for the transition to work and that they have access to good apprenticeships.

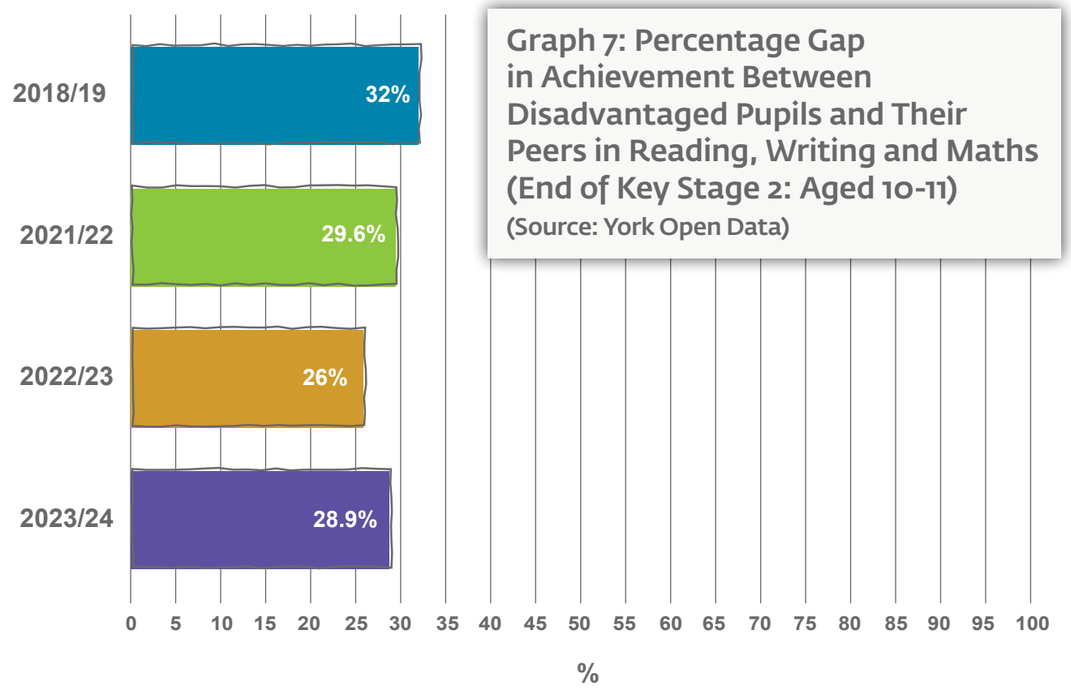
Percentage Gap in Achievement Between Disadvantaged Pupils and Their Peers in Reading, Writing and Maths (End of Key Stage 2: Aged 10-11) – Disadvantage Gap

We have not reported on this indicator for several years, first because data wasn't collected during the Covid-19 pandemic, and second because the relevant figures hadn't been released at the time of publishing. Fortunately, the statistics for this indicator have recently been updated.

Graph 6 shows the percentage of pupils in York who are achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths, at the end of Key Stage 2.[21] As noted, there are no statistics for the years 2019/20 and 2020/21 due to the Covid-19 crisis. Prior to the pandemic, in 2018/19, 68% of pupils in York were achieving the expected standard at the end of Key Stage 2. By 2021/22 this figure had dropped to 65%. This post-pandemic drop off can also be seen in the figures for Yorkshire and the Humber, and for England,

Graph 6: Pupils Reaching the Expected Standard or Higher in Reading, Writing and Maths at Key Stage 2 (Source: Department for Education)





Graph 7: Percentage Gap in Achievement Between Disadvantaged Pupils and Their Peers in Reading, Writing and Maths (End of Key Stage 2: Aged 10-11) (Source: York Open Data)

both of which saw larger percentage decreases than York. However, whilst the regional and national percentages have slightly improved over the past couple of years, in York the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard has continued to decrease, to 63% in 2022/23 and to 62% in 2023/24. Despite this decrease, a larger percentage of pupils in York are achieving the expected standard, compared to the regional (59%) and national (60%) averages.

Graph 7 shows the "disadvantage gap",[22] the percentage difference between disadvantaged students[23] and their peers in terms of reaching the expected standard in reading, writing, and maths at the end of Key Stage 2.[24] Disadvantaged pupils are defined as those who were registered as eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years, and/or children looked after by a local authority or who have left local authority care in England and Wales through adoption, a special guardianship order, a residence order or a child arrangements order. According to a Council report from early 2025, 19.7% of school-age children in York fall under this definition of disadvantaged, amounting to 4,518 pupils. Of this cohort,

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27.4% (1,121 pupils) have Special Educational Needs, and 14.9% (609 pupils) are of minority ethnicity.[25]

In 2018/19, the disadvantage gap in York was 32%. After the pandemic, it had dropped to 29.6% and by 2022/23 it had fallen to 26%. However, in 2023/24 the figure had risen to 28.9%.

In early 2024, the Sutton Trust published a policy briefing on closing the disadvantage gap that set out several recommendations.[26] They argue that the largest drivers of the gap are income deprivation and inequality.[27] High-income parents can buy their children direct advantages such as private education and tuition, and are also better able to protect their children from issues such as hunger, instability and health problems, which can have a negative impact on educational outcomes.[28]

However, the Trust notes that other factors, related to inequalities within the education system, also matter. Higher standards of teaching are the most effective way of improving educational outcomes.[29] However, teacher recruitment and retention have been an issue in England in recent years, and this problem disproportionately affects schools in more deprived areas. There is also a high level of social segregation within England's school system, between state and private sectors, but also in access to grammar schools and some high performing comprehensive schools. For example, the briefing notes that, "In the average grammar school in 2021/22, only 5.7% of pupils were eligible for free school meals compared to 22% in the average comprehensive".[30] The recent problem of high school absences in England, which we covered in last year's report, also disproportionately affects disadvantaged students, leading to lower educational attainment amongst that cohort.[31]

According to the Trust, the most effective way of lowering the disadvantage gap is to reduce poverty.[32] However, other measures can also be introduced to try and mitigate the impact of poverty on educational attainment. These include increasing investment in state schools, increasing the number of teachers, tackling social segregation in the school system, and redoubling efforts to end hunger in schools.[33]

"The attainment gap is the result of an often complex combination of interrelated factors centred around the economic, social and cultural resources that pupils and their families have at their disposal."

The Sutton Trust. General Election Policy Briefing: Closing the Attainment Gap.

CASE STUDY: Refugees and the Right to Education

This year we asked Carrie Wheater, CEO of Refugee Action York (RAY), to write about the work the organisation has been doing to help children of asylum seekers to access the right to education.

RAY is the longest-established organisation serving asylum seekers and refugees living in York, with over 20 years of experience. In the run-up to Christmas 2022, the number of potential service users of our charity more than quadrupled. We had to prepare to welcome over 400 new people, mostly in family groups, at very short notice.

The accommodation centre provided was seen as a short-term solution for housing asylum seekers while appropriate follow-on accommodation was found. The priorities were to make sure everyone had clothing suitable for the winter weather, basic toiletries, prams, SIM cards (as much of the Home Office communication is done by text), and practical information on shopping, worship, and free things to do in the city.

We believe that our limited resources should be targeted at making children feel welcome in the city, and ensuring they have everything they need to integrate into their new school and to participate in all it has to offer. The call went out for donations of school uniforms, backpacks, water bottles, and for tablets and laptops for children in exam years.

Every migrant child who is moved to York starts at their new school with the correct uniform. Additional equipment or clothing is supplied where possible through donations, and some school trips are subsidised from our emergency fund.

Parents are desperate for their children to get a good education, and it's heartening to see children, who often arrive traumatised and with no English, thrive at school. The younger ones are so excited to take part in school plays or play in the sports teams, while some older students have performed exceptionally well at GCSE and A Level.

Support for parents includes helping with applications for free bus passes and applying to the Home Office to extend their stay in York so children can complete their GCSE and A Level exams.

With no outside space to play in at the accommodation centre, or funds for paid-for leisure pursuits, we see holiday activities for young people as being a priority. With the support of a range of organisations in York, RAY has been able to provide free or discounted tickets for swimming, special exhibitions at museums, and entry to historic buildings and sports matches. We also host our own sessions for arts and crafts, York walks, and picnics in the park – with circus skills a particular favourite with the younger children.

For RAY's core young service users – those who are settled in York, including refugees from Ukraine – support has continued and services on offer have expanded. Youth club or sports sessions are held weekly, and a monthly family event offers games, arts and crafts and a shared meal. Volunteer tutors are available to prepare children for their SATS test and a range of subjects at secondary level, while there is a growing demand for befrienders among the older age group who enjoy the liberation of having someone from outside the family to spend time with.

Around 90 young people from 15 countries have regular contact with us. The accommodation centre is still open and is as busy as ever. Some families stay a year, others a matter of weeks, before being moved to houses or apartments in areas of the north of England and Scotland, whilst they await the outcome of their asylum claims.

RAY has so far supported over 1600 people housed in the accommodation, 650 of them children, from more than 40 different countries of origin.

Generally, people are sad to leave York but are relieved to be getting their own space after weeks or months in the cramped conditions at the accommodation centre. They express their gratitude for the support they have received from RAY and other organisations in the city. We have been overwhelmed by the generosity and kindness of individuals and organisations in York who respond so positively to our requests for help, particularly our dedicated volunteers.

"Parents are desperate for their children to get a good education, and it's heartening to see children, who often arrive traumatised and with no English, thrive at school."

The City of York Educational Psychology Service also gave us an update on their work in this area.

The City of York Educational Psychology Service have been working with asylum seeking children and young people with Special Educational Needs. We have used the UN Convention on Rights of the Child to structure our practice and have carefully researched the backgrounds of the families we work with, to ensure we conduct holistic, culturally competent assessments of children and young people's needs, and to write reports that compassionately champion their views and requirements. Each case is part of a learning journey, and we engage in Continuing Professional Development and reflective supervision to ensure that our practice is as inclusive, empowering and informed as possible.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The Right

International Law	Domestic Law
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966, Article 12 Treaties protecting particular groups (women, children, persons with disabilities) also include health and social care protections e.g. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006, Article 12	Care Act 2014, Section 1 and 2 National Health Service Act 2006, Section 1 National Health Service Constitution 2015 Health and Social Care Act 2012

The crisis facing the NHS has received much media attention in recent years. It has had a massively negative impact on the right to health and social care in the UK. In December 2024, Just Fair, an organisation that promotes the protection of human rights in the UK, released a report on the right to health.[34] It argued that the right is being eroded across the UK for four main reasons.[35] First, the UK government has failed to properly fund quality healthcare that meets the needs of all. Second, and consequently, the "availability, accessibility and quality of publicly provided healthcare are deteriorating". Third, privatisation is negatively impacting healthcare as people are increasingly having to pay to access treatment. Finally, a variety of factors, including poverty, racism and the effects of climate change, are making it more difficult for certain communities to access healthcare and healthy living environments.

"When discussing health as a human right, the starting point is the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health."

Just Fair Report. The Right to Health in the UK.

The Indicators

Proportion of Service Users Who Have as Much Social Contact as They Would Like

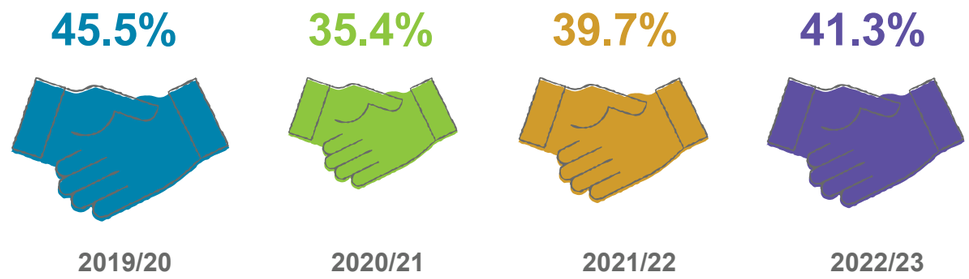
Unfortunately, at the time of writing, the latest figures for this indicator, the proportion of service users who have as much social contact as they would like, had yet to be published. Graph 8 sets out the figures from 2019/20 up until 2022/23, illustrating the drop off in the proportion of services users who had sufficient social contact during the pandemic, and the slow recovery since then.

There have been several reports in the past couple of years regarding the issues of loneliness and social isolation. These terms, although used interchangeably, describe different things. Loneliness is a feeling of distress stemming from the fact that a person doesn't have the desired level of social contact, and so is a subjective measure. Social isolation on the other hand is an objective measure, based on the actual amount of social contact a person has. However, the two are linked, with those experiencing a lower amount of social contact being at greater risk of loneliness.

According to a report from the charity Nesta, published in 2024, 8% of adults in Great Britain say they feel lonely "often" or "always", what is often described as chronic loneliness.[36]

A report from the Mental Health Foundation states that the groups most likely to experience loneliness include single people, those who are widowed, the unemployed, members of the LGBTQ community, ethnic minorities, those living alone, those living in disadvantaged areas, and those with long-term disabilities or health conditions.[37] A 2023 report by the Campaign to End Loneliness stated that, in their analysis of recent data from the Office for National

Graph 8: Proportion of Service Users in York Who Have as Much Social Contact as They Would Like (Source: York Open Data)



Statistics regarding loneliness, they found that women were significantly more likely to be chronically lonely than men.[38]

According to a recent AGE UK report, the risk factors for loneliness are increasingly being viewed through the concept of life transitions, with people being especially at risk of loneliness at times of significant change such as bereavement, relationship breakdown, or losing a job.[39]

The aforementioned Nesta report highlighted various studies that show an association between loneliness or social isolation and poorer health outcomes. For example, a 2010 paper by Holt-Lunstad stated that, "Weak social connections are estimated to increase the likelihood of early death by 50%, which may be comparable to smoking 15 cigarettes a day and more damaging to health than obesity".[40]

A 2023 report commissioned by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport examined which interventions work best in tackling the issue of loneliness.[41] The report found that there are several useful approaches, which are most effective when targeted at specific groups.[42] These include social support interventions such as mentoring and befriending schemes which help people to develop their social skills. They also include social interaction interventions such as art and dance activities which provide people with increased opportunities for socialising. Finally, psychological interventions such as cognitive behavioural therapy can be useful.

Reducing the proportion of adults in York who are experiencing loneliness is one of the goals of the City Council's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2032.[43] In seeking to achieve this goal, the Council has identified four key actions that need to be taken.

- The first action is to support individuals in the city to increase their social connections, with the city's Local Area Coordination and Social Prescribing teams helping residents to build support networks in the local community in order to increase their independence and reduce social isolation.[44]
- The second action is to support local communities to reduce loneliness. In this regard the Council has funded several community action projects aimed at increasing social connection. Amongst these has been the creation of community hubs through the Good Place Network in order to provide spaces for residents to meet and connect, and family hubs which provide support networks for parents, helping to reduce isolation.

- The third action identified by the Council as a way of tackling loneliness and isolation has been to implement intergenerational initiatives, delivered through its Age Friendly York and social connections programmes. These programmes have led to the development of projects such as Happy to Chat benches in the city, which aim to provide opportunities for people to talk to one another, and the creation of social clubs that bring younger and older neighbours together in order to build relationships.
- Finally, the Council has sought to identify gaps in provision for those at risk of loneliness and to take actions to fill them. This has led, for example, to support being offered to parents and guardians who provide Elective Home Education, as this group was identified as being at risk of social isolation. Further, the Council has carried out work to help asylum seekers feel part of the local community.

Life Expectancy and Healthy Life Expectancy

Table 4: Male Life Expectancy in York (Source: York Open Data)

	2016/17	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Male Life Expectancy in York	80.34	79.81	79.47	79.77

Table 5: Male Life Expectancy – Comparison
(Source: Office for National Statistics)

	York	Yorkshire and the Humber	England
Comparison of Male Life Expectancy in 2023/24	79.77	78.1	79.1

Table 6: Female Life Expectancy in York (Source: York Open Data)

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Female Life Expectancy	83.49	83.62	83.37	83.61

pikisuperstar@Freepik.com

Table 7: Female Life Expectancy – Comparison
(Source: York Open Data)

	York	Yorkshire and the Humber	England
Comparison of Female Life Expectancy in 2023/24	83.61	82.1	83.0

Life expectancy in the United Kingdom had stalled in the years leading up to the pandemic, and then declined due to the large number of deaths caused by Covid-19. At the time of writing last year's report the latest life expectancy figures had yet to be published. Fortunately, we now have updated statistics for the 2023/24 financial year.

The high point for male life expectancy in York was in 2016/17, when the figure was 80.34 (Table 4).[45] That figure declined in subsequent years and had dropped to as low as 79.47 in 2022/23. Encouragingly, 2023/24 saw a welcome increase in male life expectancy in York, rising to 79.77, and halting the recent decline. However, it is still below the pre-pandemic figure. Male life expectancy in York is higher than in Yorkshire and the Humber, where the latest figure is 78.10, and in England, where the figure is 79.10 (Table 5).[46]

In 2021/22, female life expectancy in York was 83.62 (Table 6).[47] This was the highest point for female life expectancy in the city. By 2022/23, the figure had dropped to 83.37. However, it rose again in 2023/24, up to 83.61.

Female life expectancy in York is higher than in Yorkshire and the Humber, where the figure is 82.10, and in England, where the figure is 83.00 (Table 7).[48]

Healthy life expectancy can be defined as "a measure of the average number of years a person would expect to live in good health based on contemporary mortality rates and prevalence of self-reported good health".[49] The high point for male healthy life expectancy in York was in 2016/17, when the figure was 65.29 (Table 8).[50] In 2023/24 this figure had dropped to 62.01. However, there has been a larger decline regarding female healthy life expectancy in the city, from its highpoint of 66.34 in 2019/20, to the most recent figure of 62.68 in 2023/24 (Table 9).[51]

Table 8: Male Healthy Life Expectancy in York
(Source: York Open Data)

	2016/17	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Male Healthy Life Expectancy	65.29	65.15	63.61	62.01

Table 9: Female Healthy Life Expectancy in York
(Source: York Open Data)

	2019/20	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Female Healthy Life Expectancy	66.34	66.15	64.08	62.68

In 2023, the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities published a report on the factors that influence healthy life expectancy based on a review of the literature on the topic and on their own analysis.[52] The report stated that chronic health conditions such as diabetes had the strongest associations with self-reported poor health.[53] In addition, the report noted that poor recent health and poor mental health were also significant factors in people reporting poor health. In terms of socio-economic factors, it was found that high educational attainment was consistently correlated with self-reported good health. Further, a number of studies found significant associations between self-reported poor health and issues such as housing problems, inadequate work and social exclusion. The most significant factor in reducing the likelihood of individuals reporting that they are in poor health is increased levels of physical activity.[54]

The report argued that "Preventing the onset of chronic conditions and helping those with chronic conditions to improve their health through effective clinical management would be key to improving population level self-reported health and would have a notable impact on healthy life expectancy".[55]

The new Labour government has made halving the gap in healthy life expectancy between the richest and poorest regions in England one of its priorities.[56] In its Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2032, the City of York Council made reducing the gap in healthy life expectancy between the richest and poorest communities in York one of its ten goals.[57]

Update – Accessing an Autism Diagnosis in York

In our 2023 report, we noted the difficulties people were experiencing in accessing a diagnostic test for autism in York. Unfortunately, it seems this problem is a continuing one. The York Press reported in December 2024 that in the NHS Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care Board area, the number of patients with suspected autism who were on a waiting list for diagnosis had risen by almost 1,000 in the previous twelve months, up from 5,290 to 6,720.[58] Sian Balsom, Manager of Healthwatch York, one of our steering group members, expressed concern over these waiting times, noting that a formal diagnosis of autism was needed in order to guarantee that "schools, workplaces, health settings and other public bodies will make adjustments for autistic people". York Human Rights City Network intends to maintain a focus on this issue in the coming years.

CASE STUDY: York CVS and Proactive Social Prescribing

This year we invited Alison Semmence, Chief Executive of the York Centre for Voluntary Service (CVS), to write about the Centre's social prescribing work.

Social Prescribing is an approach that links people to non-medical sources of support in order to improve their health and wellbeing. Social prescribers support individuals in accessing local Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector (VCSE) activities, as well as statutory services, with the aim of supporting them to self-manage their health.

York CVS has been working with people with long term respiratory health conditions through a Proactive Social Prescribing (PSP) approach with great results. PSP targets a specific cohort of patients who meet certain criteria – in this case:

- People with long term respiratory conditions who are at high risk of unplanned and urgent admissions to hospital.
- Individuals who are isolated because of their poor respiratory health and related long-term conditions.
- People with long term respiratory conditions who reside in socially deprived areas, and individuals on low income.

The Social Prescriber contacts individuals identified by health colleagues as meeting the criteria and likely to benefit from support. If the person wants to take up the offer, they work with the Social Prescriber to explore what matters to them, to give them more confidence and control when managing their own health. Key to all of this is the development of positive working relationships.

The Social Prescriber works closely with VSCE sector organisations, as well as health and social care sectors, to encourage the person to access and engage with local services. This approach supports the development of positive relationships, so people feel connected and invested in their local community.

The support provided by the Social Prescriber is wide and varied and is very much led by the needs of the individual. Some examples are:

- Developing a personalised plan.
- Mental health support and referrals.
- Health and Social Occupational Therapists (OT), physiotherapy referrals.
- Access to community support and interest groups.
- Support with loneliness and isolation.
- Physical health and exercise groups.
- Smoking cessation, alcohol and weight management.

- Supported employment and return to work.
- Local authority and DWP benefits support.
- Budgeting, debt, and financial support.
- Volunteering opportunities.

In the past 18 months, over 100 people have had one-to-one support through this initiative leading to positive health changes and measurable outcomes, as below.

- 68% of patients felt they could manage their health more effectively since engaging with the Social Prescriber.
- 83% of patients stated they would not have been aware of or accessed the support without the Social Prescribing intervention.
- 85% of patients felt more in control of their health and wellbeing following support from the Social Prescriber.
- 82% of patients reported that, overall, they were satisfied with their life, whereas before this intervention, only 9% were satisfied.

Overall, people felt happier and more in control of their health.

Mrs J is a 70 year-old lady who lives by herself in social housing. She has several physical long term health conditions including angina, osteoarthritis, diverticulitis, chronic kidney disease and COPD. She uses ambulatory and long term O2 therapy. She has an extensive history of mental illness, including chronic depression, anxiety and insomnia.

Mrs. J had very little confidence in services, particularly with the local authority; she had remained in social housing for several years with significant damp issues and repairs which were outstanding. These issues were making her mental and physical health worse.

Following several calls, a personalised plan was agreed, including the house repairs, mental health support and a respiratory review, prioritising the housing issue. The Social Prescriber worked closely with the Local Authority and reached an agreement for a surveyor to visit and look at the damp issues. A GP provided a letter to evidence the significant damp problem and the effect this was having on her physical health, particularly her respiratory condition.

During the completion of the agreed works, Mrs. J was supported to move to temporary housing and the Social Prescriber worked closely with tenant support services to ensure that her stay was as comfortable as possible. Mrs J has now returned home with all agreed work completed, including damp proofing and replacement floors, carpet, etc.

THE RIGHT TO HOUSING

The Right

International Law	Domestic Law
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966, Article 11 Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, Article 27.3	Human Rights Act 1998, Schedule 1, Part 1, Article 8 Housing Act 1996, Part 6 and 7 Protection from Eviction Act 1977 Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

The high cost of housing in York has been an ongoing issue and has been recognised as one of the key drivers of homelessness in the city.[59] The average cost of homes in York is around nine times higher than average earnings,[60] and rental prices are amongst the highest in the north of England.[61] According to a City of York Council review of 40 lower market private rental properties advertised in the city in December 2023, none were affordable within the Local Housing Allowance level.[62]

The City Council outlined its strategy to deal with the issues of homelessness and rough sleeping in York in a report published in late 2024.[63] The strategy, which was produced in consultation with a range of organisations, aims to make homelessness in York “rare, brief and non-recurring”.[64]

It proposes to achieve this aim first, by providing high quality homelessness prevention services to stop people in the city becoming homeless; second, by expanding and adequately funding the Housing First model to help those that have become homeless; and third, by increasing the overall supply of affordable housing in the city, which it recognises is currently inadequate.[65]

In terms of prevention, the report states that several actions will be developed, including a Tenancy Sustainment Strategy, a Supported Housing Strategy, and a Family Intervention Tenancy Policy.[66] The strategies will be aimed at reducing the risk of eviction and homelessness by building the independence of at-risk individuals, and by seeking to ensure that the requisite supports are in place for

vulnerable populations such as young people with Learning Disabilities, and those with addiction issues.

Housing First is “an intervention that supports homeless people with multiple and complex needs by providing them with permanent independent housing and flexible, wrap-around support services”.[67] It provides “chronically homeless people with ordinary housing in the community without expecting them to be ‘housing ready’ as traditional staircase homelessness services usually do”.[68] The City Council first adopted this approach in 2015, although on a very limited basis. In our 2018 Indicator Report we recognised that Housing First can be seen as a human-rights based approach to homelessness, as it “emphasises self-determination and choice, and respects individuals’ rights to be involved in decisions that affect them”.[69]

The Council report states that this model will now be expanded in York, and will be used to rapidly rehouse single people who are facing homelessness so that they do not have to spend lengthy periods living in temporary accommodation.[70] People experiencing homelessness will spend a short amount of time in a ‘hostel-type’ building, during which time their needs will be assessed. They will then move into their own home and will be supported by a variety of tailored services aimed at meeting their needs and building their independence. This will enable them to move towards achieving their goals such as finding work and creating relationships in the community.[71]

According to the Council’s Executive Member for Housing, Planning and Safer Communities, Councillor Michael Pavlovic, York has implemented the Housing First model on a small scale over the past number of years, and it has proved successful. He was quoted in The York Press, stating that “What we’ve seen is about 80 percent of people living within Housing First in York have been able to maintain a tenancy over a 12-month then three-year period”, a figure he said is “far in excess of what we see in traditional models”.[72]

The Council’s strategy recognises that in order for the Housing First approach to work, there will need to be a sufficient supply of social housing. To this end, the Council states that it aims to supply 250 additional one-bed homes between now and 2029.[73] There will also be a focus on increasing the supply of larger social housing accommodation to meet the needs of families.[74]

Writing in The York Press, Fiona McCulloch, Chief Officer at Citizens Advice York, one of our steering group members, has argued that the city’s voluntary sector is well placed to play a key role in tackling the housing and homelessness problem.[75] Fiona argued that, in particular, the sector could expand “services that intervene early to prevent evictions and provide support for those at risk”.

It is clear that the task of achieving the Council’s goal of ending rough sleeping by 2027[76] will require the joint efforts of the Council and the voluntary sector.

The Indicators

Statutory Homelessness

When someone is assessed for homelessness, there are three possible outcomes. First, the person may be assessed as being homeless. In that case, the local authority is deemed to have what is called a relief duty towards the person, meaning it has a duty to take reasonable steps to help the person secure accommodation. Alternatively, the person may be assessed as being at risk of homelessness. In that case, the local authority is deemed to have what is called a prevention duty, obliging it to work with that person to prevent them from becoming homeless. Finally, a person may be assessed as not being at risk of homelessness, in which case, the local authority is deemed not to have a statutory duty towards that person.

In the 2023/24 financial year, 763 people were assessed for homelessness in York, and of those people, 21 were deemed not to be owed a duty by the Council (Table 10).[77] Due to reporting problems, we do not know the total number assessed for homelessness or the number of people deemed not to be owed a duty from the previous three years, and so we

Table 10: Statutory Homelessness Assessment in York by Financial Year
(Source: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities)

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Total Number Assessed	?	?	?	763
Prevention Duty Owed	566	557	521	487
Relief Duty Owed	237	247	257	249
No Duty Owed	?	?	?	21

can't make a comparison regarding these categories.

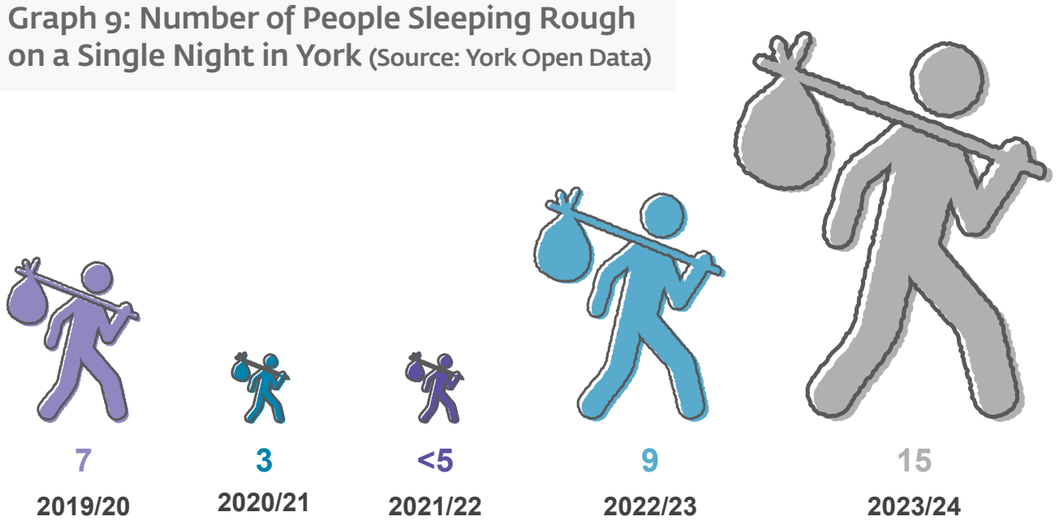
We can, however, make such comparisons when looking at the figures for prevention duty owed and relief duty owed. In 2023/24, 487 people were deemed to be owed a prevention duty. That's down from 521 in the previous year, a 6.5% decrease. Since 2021/22, when the number of people owed a prevention duty was 557, there has been a 12.6% decrease. In 2023/24, 249 people were deemed to be owed a relief duty, down from 257 in the previous year, a 3.1% decrease.

Rough Sleeper Count

The rough sleeper count indicator records the number of people sleeping outdoors in York on a particular night of the year. In our 2023 Indicator Report, we noted that the Council had decided not to renew the Salvation Army's contract to provide services for rough sleepers and would instead be providing these services itself.[78] The Council has now included the "number of people sleeping rough" as one of its new key performance indicators".[79]

In 2022/23, 9 people were found to be sleeping rough in York on a particular night (Graph 9). In 2024, the figure increased to 15.

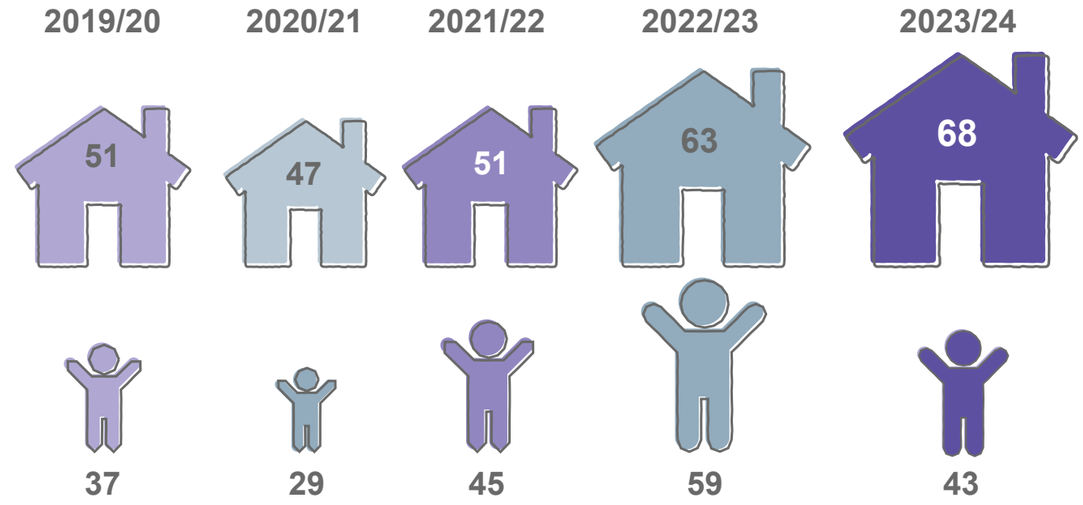
Graph 9: Number of People Sleeping Rough on a Single Night in York (Source: York Open Data)



Number of Households / Children Living in Temporary Accommodation

This indicator records the average number of households, and the average number of children, who are living in temporary accommodation in York throughout the year. When a person or a family is assessed as being homeless, they may be offered what is known as "emergency accommodation" for a short period of time. If that person or family is deemed eligible for longer-term housing, they may then be offered temporary accommodation until such long-term housing becomes available.

Graph 10: Number of Households / Children Living in Temporary Accommodation in York (Source: York Open Data)



In 2022/23, there were, on average, 63 households in temporary accommodation in York (Graph 10).[80] In 2023/24 this number rose to 68, a 7.9% increase. Since 2021/22, there has been a 44.7% increase in the average number of households in temporary accommodation.

2023/24 saw 43 children, on average, living in temporary accommodation in York (Graph 10).[81] That's down from 59 in the previous year, a 27.1% decrease. However, since the 2020/21 financial year, there has been a 48.3% increase in the number of children in temporary accommodation.

According to a report by the City Council, use of temporary accommodation in York is low compared to national averages, and the city has a relatively large amount of such accommodation, meaning that it can avoid having to use expensive alternatives such as housing people in private rented accommodation.[82] However, the new Council strategy, discussed above, envisages that people will have to spend less time in temporary accommodation, as they will instead be quickly provided with permanent housing.[83]

CASE STUDY: YorSpace Community Land Trust – Pioneering Innovative Approaches to Delivering Low Carbon, Lower Cost Neighbourhoods

This year we invited Laurie Smith, CEO at Yorspace, to discuss the Lowfield Green Housing Cooperative.

YorSpace is York's Community Land Trust (CLT). We exist to own land in perpetuity on behalf of the people of York, ensuring that it is protected from profit-driven development, and instead used for community benefit. We act as a developer to deliver housing schemes on behalf of community-led groups in the York region, on rental, innovative co-operative home ownership, or discounted restricted-sale models. Being a not-for-profit developer on CLT-owned land enables us to do what so many new housing developments aspire to, but don't quite manage: low-carbon, forever-affordable housing across an entire development. We help our community create neighbourhoods in York that are more sustainable, more diverse, and as accessible as possible for all.

We have been working with the City of York Council since 2016 to bring the groundbreaking Lowfield Green development to fruition. Working with the Lowfield Green resident group and key stakeholders, we've been able to bring in the financial and professional resources needed to deliver against our three organisational aims: Financially and Socially Accessible, Sustainable, and Community-led housing. The founding cohort of residents will move into the first homes in the Summer of 2025. The aim is to create a resilient, low carbon, co-housing community. The Lowfield Green Housing Cooperative is made up of local people who live, work and play in a city that has left so many people behind. Members come from a diverse range of ages, circumstances, and backgrounds, but they all follow an ethos of sharing resources and lived experiences, aiming to tread a little lighter on the planet.

"We help our community create neighbourhoods in York that are more sustainable, more diverse, and as accessible as possible for all."

As a community led housing cooperative from the beginning, our community is at the heart of our project, and we continue to build and develop a group of people who want to create a different way of living, as an intentional community, together in York. We make decisions about our future homes together through a sociocratic process.

Despite being a volunteer led organisation up until 2023, the CLT has galvanised the opportunity of the Lowfield Green project to achieve a number of notable milestones, that include:

- Established a local profile for raising awareness of housing issues in York.
- Developed a collaborative partnership with City of York Council and Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Raised £422,000 from more than 160 social investors through a community share offer; a national record for a Community Benefit Society in 2020. The money was used to purchase the land needed for building.
- Generated £1,100,000 in grant funding.
- Secured £2.5 million worth of development finance to deliver Lowfield Green.
- Grew from a handful of friends to an organisation with over 600 members.
- Established a national profile for creating novel partnerships between community land trust and co-operatives.
- Became part of a national movement of community asset developers.

Lowfield Green will deliver 10 features that are unique to the first project of this type in the city:

Yorspace

- 20 new build permanently affordable homes for local people.
- Co-op designed, owned and operated as an "intentional community".
- Communal shared facilities including workshop, cycle storage and growing space.
- Built around One Planet Living Principle.
- Built to Passivhaus standard resulting in much lower running costs.
- Community owned renewable energy supporting residents to be more energy independent.
- Delivered at 70% of Market Value for comparable homes in the city.
- Restricted leasehold ownership model to ensure housing remains affordable for future generations.
- Delivered in partnership with a range of regional stakeholders, funders and financial institutions.
- "Proof of concept" should allow for scaling up of more schemes in the future.

A DECENT STANDARD OF LIVING

The Right

International Law	Domestic Law
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966, Article 11 Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, Article 27 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006, Article 28 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women 1979, Article 14 European Social Charter 1961, Article 4 (1)	There are no domestic laws specifically relating to the right to a decent standard of living

The Indicators

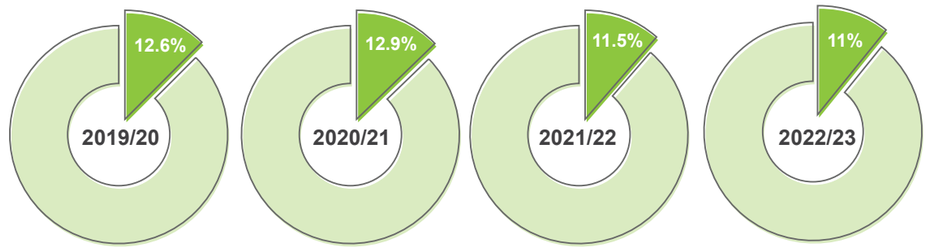
Child Poverty

Child poverty is measured by looking at the number, or proportion, of children living in families whose reported income is less than 60% of the UK median. To measure the rate of child poverty in York we rely on statistics provided by York Open Data, and on figures published by the End Child Poverty Coalition. The York Open Data numbers do not account for housing costs, whilst the End Child Poverty Coalition figures do. The latest figures from both statistical sources cover the 2022/23 financial year.

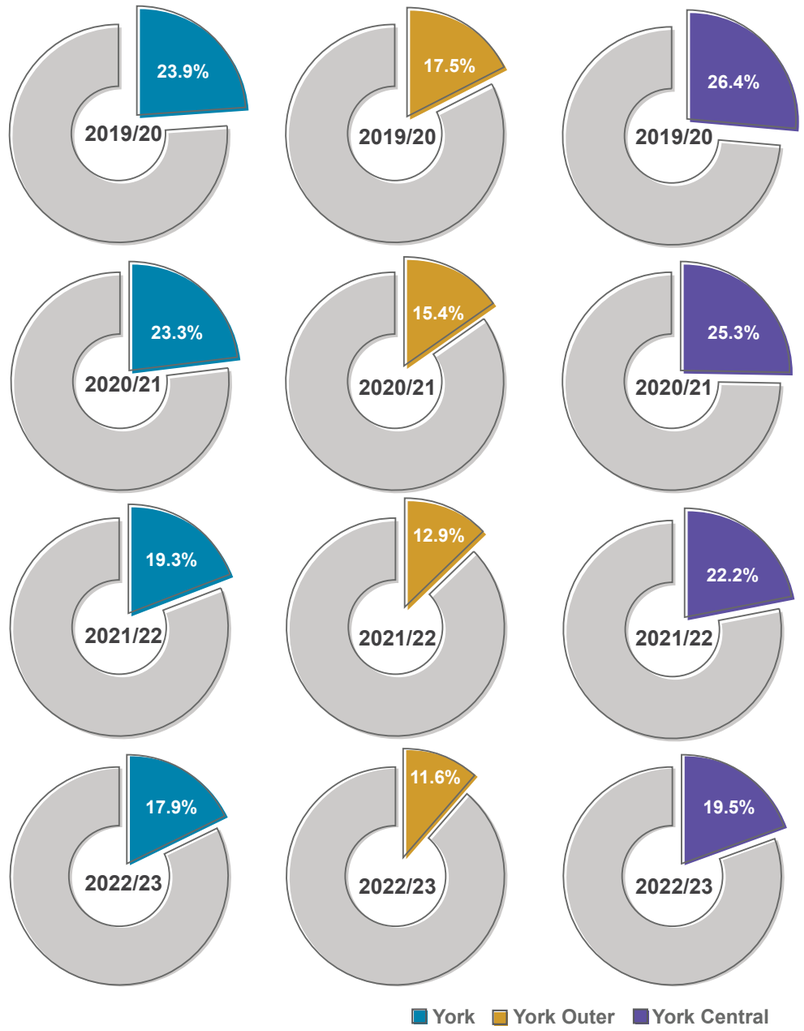
According to the York Open Data figures, in 2021/22, 11.5% of children in York were living in poverty (Graph 11).[84] In 2022/23, this figure had dropped to 11%. This continued a trend of decreasing child poverty over the past two years, with the figure at 12.9% in 2020/21.

According to the End Child Poverty Coalition statistics, in 2021/22, 19.3% of children in York were living in poverty, amounting to 7,112 children (Graph 12).[85] In 2022/23 that figure had dropped to 17.9% or 6,613 children, a 7.3% decrease. Since 2020/21, there has been a 25.1%

Graph 11: Child Poverty in York Before Housing Costs (Source. York Open Data)



Graph 12: Child Poverty in York After Housing Costs
(Sources: End Child Poverty Coalition)



decrease in the rate of child poverty in York.

As has been the case in previous years, the rate of child poverty in York Central is higher than it is in York Outer. In the latest figures, child poverty was 40.6% higher in the former.

According to research carried out by academics at the University of Loughborough on behalf of the End Child Poverty Coalition, child poverty in the UK is at an all-time high, with 4.3 million children living in relative poverty.[86] However, there is significant variation between UK nations, regions and constituencies. In the West Midlands, the rate is as high as 39%, whilst in East England it is 23%. In Yorkshire and the Humber the rate is 29%. Therefore, the child poverty rate in York is relatively low compared to much of the rest of the UK.

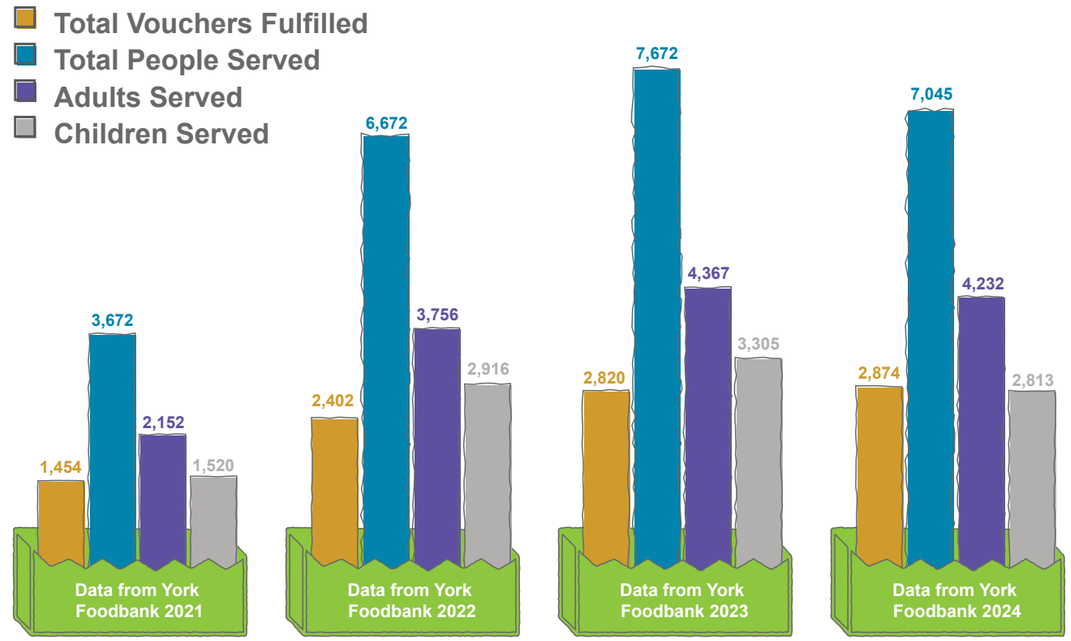
Campaigners have pointed out the significant impact the two-child benefit limit has on child poverty. The University of Loughborough research showed a strong correlation between child poverty and the limit.[87] The researchers found that, with the exception of the South-West of England, the percentage of children affected by the limit was significantly lower in constituencies with low child poverty rates.

In a report released earlier this year, the Cost-of-Living Research Group at the University of York pointed out that around 300,000 children would be lifted out of child poverty in the United Kingdom if the two-child limit was removed, while a further 700,000 would be lifted out of less deep poverty.[88]

Foodbank Use

Foodbank use in York has increased significantly in recent years, with numerous services springing up across the city. For our indicator, we use statistics provided by one of these services, the York Foodbank, run by the Trussell Trust.[89] The figures cover a ten-month period from January 1st until October 31st each year. In our 2023 report, we noted that 2,820 vouchers were fulfilled at the York foodbank (Graph 13). This served 7,672 people, including 3,305 children. In 2024, the number of vouchers fulfilled increased to 2,874. However, the number of people served by these vouchers dropped slightly to 7045, and the number of children served to 2,813. Since 2021, there has been a 97.7% increase in the number of vouchers fulfilled by York Foodbank, a 91.9% increase in the number of people

Graph 13: Foodbank Use (Source: York Foodbank (Trussell Trust))



served by the foodbank, and an 85.1% increase in the number of children served by the foodbank.

The extent of the problem in York was recently highlighted in The York Press, whose reporter spoke with some of the 56 volunteers at the Hoping Street Kitchen, which runs at King's Manor Garden in the city.[90] One volunteer noted that the number of people using the service has increased since it came into being in 2021. The kitchen serves up to 100 diners per week, including students, elderly people, single parents, and families in poverty.

Earnings Gap

The earnings gap is the difference in full-time weekly wages between those earning median or average wages, and those on low wages, defined as those in the 25th percentile. It is therefore a measure of inequality, and so the smaller the gap the better.

In 2024, the median full-time weekly wage in York was £729.70, up from £671.70 in the previous year, an increase of £58 pounds, or 8.7% (Table 11).[91] The median full-time weekly wage in York is £59 higher than in Yorkshire and the Humber. It is £2.40 lower than the average for

Table 11: Earnings Gap in York (Source: Office for National Statistics)

	2022	2022	2022	2023	2023	2023	2024	2024	2024
	Median Full-Time Weekly Wage	25th Percentile	Earnings Gap	Median Full-Time Weekly Wage	25th Percentile	Earnings Gap	Median Full-Time Weekly Wage	25th Percentile	Earnings Gap
York	£622.2	£458.0	**£164.2**	£671.7	£518.5	**£153.2**	£729.7	£549.5	**£180.2**
Yorkshire and the Humber	£588.1	£454.9	**£133.2**	£633	£491.5	**£141.5**	£670.8	£526	**£144.8**
England	£648.2	£484.4	**£163.8**	£689.9	£521	**£168.9**	£732.1	£558.4	**£173.7**
UK	£641.8	£480.8	**£161**	£687	£519.1	**£167.9**	£728.3	£555.8	**£172.5**

England, but is now £1.40 higher than that of the UK.

In 2024, the wage of those in the 25th percentile in York was £549.50, up from £518.50 in 2023. That's a £31 or 5.6% increase. The 25th percentile full-time weekly wage in York is £23.50 higher than in Yorkshire and the Humber. It is £8.90 lower than the average for England and is £6.30 lower than that of the UK.

In 2024, therefore, the earnings gap between those on median and low wages in York was £180.20, compared with £153.20 in 2023. That's an increase of £27, or 15%. The gap in York is £35.40 higher than in Yorkshire and the Humber as a whole, £6.50 higher than the gap in England, and £7.70 higher than that of the UK.

2024 has therefore seen a relatively significant increase in the earnings gap in York, driven by a particularly large increase in median wages.

Universal Credit

In September 2023, the total number of Universal Credit claimants in York (including those in work) was 12,156 (Table 12).[92] By September 2024, that figure had risen to 13,714. That's an increase of 1,558 people, which is a 12.8% increase.[93]

In September 2023, the total number of people claiming out of work benefits in York was 2,160, which was 1.6% of those in the city eligible to work (Table 13).[94] By September 2024, that figure had risen to 2,585, or 2% of those eligible to work. That's an increase of 425 people.

Table 12: Total Number of Universal Credit Claimants in York (Source: York Open Data)

September 2022	September 2023	September 2024
11,367	12,156	13,714

Table 13: Number and Percentage of Out of Work Benefits Claimants – Comparison (Source: York Open Data)

	September 2022	September 2023	September 2024
York	1.9% (2,455)	1.6% (2,160)	2% (2,585)
Yorkshire and the Humber	4%	3.9%	4.8%
Great Britain	3.6%	3.6%	4.3%

The percentage of those eligible to work claiming out of work benefits is lower in York than in Yorkshire and the Humber, where it is 4.8%, and in Great Britain, where it is 4.3%.

In York, there is significant variation between wards with regards to the proportion of residents claiming out of work benefits. According to statistics published by York Open Data, the ward with the highest percentage of such claimants was Westfield, where 3.7% of residents were claiming out of work benefits.[95] In Bishopthorpe, just 0.9% of residents were claiming the benefit.

According to data collected by Citizens Advice York, Benefits and Universal Credit issues were amongst the topics they had given most assistance with in the 2024/25 financial year.[96] The most common issues related to the Personal Independence Payment, the Attendance Allowance, and the Employment Support Allowance, all of which are payments made to individuals with disabilities or health conditions. Issues related to Council Tax and Pension Credit were also common.

A Decent Standard of Living

CASE STUDY: The Workplace Capabilities Assessment

This year we invited Sue Royston from Citizens Advice York to discuss concerns over proposed changes to the Workplace Capabilities Assessment.

In Autumn 2024, the Labour Chancellor Rachel Reeves announced, "We inherited the last government's plan to reform the work capability assessment. We will deliver the savings as part of our fundamental reform to the health and disability benefits". She has not said how "the savings" will be made, but the Labour approach seems unlikely to be much different to the last Government's plan.

The Conservative Government had planned to make these cuts by changing the criteria in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Work Capability Assessment (WCA) (for new claimants, not existing ones). The WCA assesses whether someone is able to work and, if not, which benefit group they should be placed in – the Limited Capability for Work Related Activity (LCWRA) or the Limited Capability for Work (LCW) group. People in the LCW group do not have to look for work but can be required to do "work preparation" activities. Those in the LCWRA group are not required to do any work preparation; the DWP website states you will be in this group "if your illness or disability severely limits what you can do".

The savings would result from two main changes to the WCA:

- Currently, a person will be in the LCWRA group if there would be a substantial risk to their or another's health if they were to undertake work related activity – usually because of a serious mental health condition. This would no longer apply for new claimants (apart from in "exceptional circumstances"). DWP thinks, once fully rolled out, this would put 163,000 people in the LCW group instead.[97]
- Currently, a person will be in the LCWRA group if they cannot walk 50 metres. Difficulty walking would no longer be included in the LCWRA criteria at all for new claimants – once fully rolled out 260,000 people would be placed in the LCW group instead.[98]

In total 424,000 more people would be in the LCW group instead of the LCWRA group but from all the changes only about 15,000 are predicted to find work.[99]

In the LCW group they would get £90.50 a week to cover non-housing living costs. That is less than half the amount (£186.33/wk) they would get in the LCWRA group. For comparison, anyone above pension age gets at least £218.15 per week.

The changed mobility rules would not just affect people with a muscular or skeletal condition. They would also affect people who become exhausted or breathless upon exertion. None of the other criteria for entry to LCWRA cover activities that might be affected by exhaustion or breathlessness, even though this clearly affects someone's ability to work.

These changes will affect many in their late fifties or early sixties. In the most deprived areas, of those aged 60 to 69, almost 40% have a major illness. Those in the most deprived areas are also three times more likely to die before the age of 70 years. Already a quarter of people aged 60 to 65 live in poverty – the highest poverty rate for any adult age group.[100]

"We see many people who are unable to work because of illness or disability who are really struggling financially."

Citizens Advice have been campaigning for years about the WCA. We see many people who are unable to work because of illness or disability who are really struggling financially. These changes would make that worse. The final decision will be announced in the spring so it will be crucial over the next couple of months to try to make the Government take these concerns on board.

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York: Human Rights City

York Human Rights City Network (YHRCN) is a civil society partnership hosted jointly by York CVS (Centre for Voluntary Service) and the Centre for Applied Human Rights (CAHR) at the University of York. York CVS roots the Network within York's vibrant civil society. CAHR roots the Network in the human rights discourse. The Network was formed in 2011, and has grown organically over the intervening years. Our Steering Group comprises representatives from civil society organisations working in each of the five priority rights areas. Our aim is to be a catalyst for York people, business and organisations to champion a vibrant, diverse, fair and safe city. We have in the past worked closely with representatives of the public sector in York, most notably the City of York Council, York NHS Teaching Hospital Foundation, Tees Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust, North Yorkshire Police and Explore York.

York: Human Rights City

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