

Appendix A

Data analysis for the North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund – September to December 2013

This appendix details the headline analysis of the key data sources identified in 2.1. Analysis has taken place on an ongoing basis since April 2013 and a more formal review took place at the six month stage (end September 2013). Further to this analysis and the issues raised by it, a number of changes have been made to the scheme, which have also been detailed below.

1. Which groups are seeking support? What are their needs? What does this tell us?

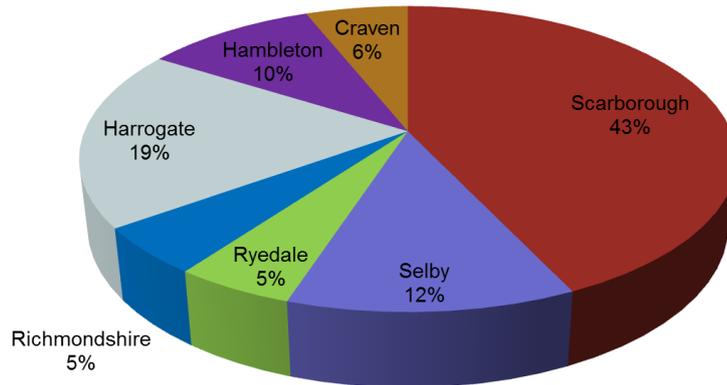
Since the implementation of the scheme in April 2013, the NYCC Customer Services Centre (CSC) has been receiving, on average, somewhere between 300 to 330 calls per month from customers requiring support of some kind. On average, over a third of these callers are identified as being eligible for support from the NYLAF, following a 'diagnostic' of circumstances undertaken within the CSC. Categorising these eligible callers into target groups within the NYLAF, the majority are families under exceptional pressure, followed closely by those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, then people who have physical disabilities or mental health problems.¹ Other categories of need (within NYLAF terms) such as learning disability, domestic abuse, carers and those recently released from prison represented relatively small proportional volumes each month.

This demand pattern roughly correlates proportionally with those key groups who sought assistance from the previous provision under the DWP's Social Fund. For example, between April and September 2011, 33% of Community Care Grant applications came from families under exceptional pressure and 19% from those on a planned programme of resettlement or needing some help to be able to remain within the community. This tells us that families and those who are homeless/risk of homelessness remain the key groups seeking to benefit from assistance. To ensure that we therefore have sufficient authorised agency coverage to be able to provide support for these high potential volumes of customers to the NYLAF across the county, further recruitment of agencies was undertaken after the scheme went 'live' in April 2013. As a result, there are now at least two authorised agencies dealing with homelessness issues in each district and in some district there are as many as three or four (Harrogate). For families, coverage is provided countywide through the network of Children's Centres for pre-school age children and via Educational Social Workers for school-age children. Further work is currently underway to identify how best to support those young people who are at sixth form college.

The proportional breakdown of call volumes received by district from April to end August 2013 was as follows.

¹ For the months of June to September 2013, families under pressure represented around 31% of calls made by those eligible for the NYLAF; homelessness represented 25%; physical disabilities and mental health problems represented 14% and 13% respectively.

Call volumes by district



Evidently, Scarborough Borough has by far the greatest share of callers seeking support, with Harrogate and Selby following on but at much smaller proportions. More recently (Quarter 3), the trend has been for Selby to take second place above Harrogate. Craven, Richmondshire and Ryedale have the lowest proportion of customers calling NYCC seeking support and this trend has continued into Q3. As is highlighted in section 2 below, these proportional volumes do roughly translate into supported provided by the NYLAF across the districts. Call volumes correlate with the broader picture of socio-economic deprivation and need for key support services that are well known within the county.

As described above, over a third of the calls received each month are from customers who are both eligible for the NYLAF and seeking goods that we can provide. Of those customers identified as ineligible because they are requesting something we cannot provide, a sample of the proportional requests made (April to August 2013) were as follows:

- Benefit advance (DWP) – 15%
- Cash or loans only – 10%
- Financial advice (e.g. debt issues) – 2.5%
- Customer is out of area – 2%
- Travel expenses – 0.9%
- Removal costs – 0.8%.

As far as possible, Customer Services signpost on such customers to other possible and appropriate forms of support, such as the DWP/Job Centres, Citizens Advice, South Yorkshire Credit Union, other LA's scheme, etc. Overall, the highest single demand from all callers seeking support is for food; some 20% of the total volume on average. In addition, we know that demand for food (along with cash, incidentally) is greatest overall in Scarborough Borough. This is reflective of the high level of socio-economic deprivation in pockets of the borough, relative to the rest of the county.

Additionally, feedback from Customer Service advisors has identified that there are a number of people contacting NYCC who may not quite be eligible for the NYLAF but who are vulnerable in some other way (e.g. low income, no food, young children in the household). In some cases, this vulnerability has developed as a result of having been sanctioned from receiving benefits (see also section 3 below).

2. What is the analysis of applications received to the NYLAF and awards made? What demographic groups are applying?

Since April 2013, 823 applications have been received to the NYLAF (as at end October 2013) and 766 awards have been made. There was a slow level of take-up of the NYLAF in April and May following the change in service from DWP, but applications are now averaging out in the range of 140 to 170 per month. Spend against the Fund has, as such, also picked up since June 2013 and is now routinely nudging at or going over the monthly budget limit. Where spend has gone over this has been possible because of the surplus available from the slow pick-up at the start of the scheme. As of end October 2013, spend is at almost 40% of the total annual budget available.

Between April and end October 2013, we also know that the highest awards categories are consistently:

- families under exceptional pressure (38%);
- homelessness (20%);
- mental health problems (12%);
- physical disability (11%).

This correlates with the proportional call volumes received into the NYCC Customer Service Centre, as identified in section 1 above. This indicates that the groups experiencing and communicating with us about the greatest levels of need are – to some degree at least – seeing that translated into assistance given.

The highest volumes of awards given were for white goods (777), followed by food (304). Indications of need for white goods has not been high through Customer Services, although it's possible that a key 'appeal' of the NYLAF, once referred, is in accessing household items that would be costly to low income households. It's also possible that where customers would previously have accessed cash under DWP, this money may have been used in the main for buying goods as part of resettlement, for example. The trend of high demand for food is also reflected by feedback from food banks across the county in 2013; particularly in Scarborough (see also section 3, below).

Equality monitoring data

Looking at the equality monitoring data received by Charis up to end August 2013 where applicants have chosen to provide this information on the online form, we know the following:

61% of applicants were women; 33% of applicants were men.

The largest age groups applying to the NYLAF were those aged 20 to 29 (28%), followed by those aged 30 to 39 (23%) and then those aged 50 to 64 (20%). For those aged 65 upwards, numbers were very low; around 4% in total. A slightly higher number of young people (16 to 19 years) was reported as applying at 8%.

Around 44% of applicants reported that they had a disability, although this may not necessarily be their key cause of need for support from the NYLAF.

The majority of applicants identified their ethnic origin as being English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British. 6% of applicants came from the Gypsy or Irish Traveller community; 3% were identified as of White and Black African / White and Black Caribbean / other Black/African/Caribbean background / any other Asian background.

As the highest numbers of calls and subsequently applications to the NYLAF come from families under exceptional pressure, the high numbers of applications from women is not unexpected. The demographic statistics in terms of age are not dissimilar to those recorded within the DWP statistics around provision of crisis loans and community care grants. In fact, only around 1% of applications for crisis loans were made to the DWP, for example, by those aged 65 to 90 years and as such the NYLAF has improved on this.

Agency feedback

We have also received a lot of agency feedback about the scheme, particularly through our six-month stakeholder review in September 2013. Further information about this and how it was used can be found in the November NYLAF update bulletin at www.nypartnerships.org.uk/nylaf - see 'Related Media'.

3. How have we used the data to make changes and improvements to the service provided?

Our analysis (as above) has helped us to improve and refine the service on an ongoing basis since April 2013. The key changes are detailed below:

- Introduced provision of utility top-up to meet the needs of a number of callers to NYCC Customer Services. A number of customers were receiving food but had no means of cooking it through. Top-up provision provides a discrete (week's worth) amount of credit for gas and electricity.
- Introduction of a 'fast-track' process for food and utility top-up provision for first-time applicants. This means that applicants do not need to be referred to an authorised agency or provide evidence of their circumstances but can call NYCC Customer Services and, after providing some details to Charis Grants, will receive a food parcel within 24 hours. For the second application, the applicant will be referred to an agency as there may be a need for longer term support. The fast-track is particularly useful for those who cannot easily (physically) access a support agency but have an urgent need for food or utility credit.
- Implementation of one-off provision of emergency food parcels and utility top-up for customers who are vulnerable but who don't fully meet the NYLAF criteria. We will continue to monitor these customer volumes alongside those customers who are fully eligible for the NYLAF.
- Included some basic toiletries in our food parcels following agency feedback on supporting people into work, etc. We have also included tin openers as standard, to help older people or those with disabilities who may struggle to open ring-pull tins.
- Changed the process for individual applications to make it phone-based for those who cannot access an authorised agency. This is much quicker than the previous paper-based form.

- Responded to the high demand for food in Scarborough Borough by working with a local charity supplying food parcels to support them to provide the first parcel of food for their customers who are also eligible for NYLAF. This has resulted in over 340 parcels of food being given out to customers locally in Scarborough town between end August and end October 2013. These customers were also able to therefore access a food parcel more quickly than could be provided by NYLAF.
- Provided information to be shared within public health circles about the NYLAF, to help ensure that we reach those customers in more rural areas (e.g. via community nurses) and those with mental health problems, for example, but who are not linked in to an authorised agency.
- Looked to recruit more authorised agencies to help provide extra support across the vulnerability categories. We have communicated with the county's advocacy services and AgeUK in relation to building better connections around supporting older people and those with disabilities and are keen to enhance links there. We have recruited drug and alcohol treatment services to the network since 'go-live', along with two large homelessness agencies.

Further details of changes made in response to agency feedback can be found in the November 2013 update bulletin at www.nypartnerships.org.uk/nylaf (see 'Related Media').