



Social Justice in York, 2030 (Extended Summary)

**York Business School
Futures & Foresight Research Group**

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Abstract

In this report we provide findings from the implementation of a Futures and Foresight Workshop (FFW) to consider social justice in York and its environs, held in March 2020. Mini-scenarios are developed for the year 2030, from which implications are considered. Specific consideration is given to key inhibitors of social justice with respect to inequality and inequity across the areas of poverty, housing and rough sleeping, health and social care, and employment and training. Analysis of these areas highlights dominant patterns and trends with respect to the behaviour of people, technology, geo-politics, regulation and the law, economy, ecology and climate. These form the basis of the developed mini-scenarios. Assumptions underpinning the scenarios were shared and tested within the FFW, after which participants were able to consider actions for the near future. The challenges that implication reveal are non-trivial, complex, inter-dependent and urgent. The report concludes by acknowledging the role of initiatives, such as the Centre for Language and Social Justice Research at YSJ, and the need to 'light fires of concern' amongst stakeholders who can influence change.





Introduction

In this report we provide findings from a Futures and Foresight Workshop (FFW) to consider social justice in York and its environs in the year 2030. The FFW was held in response to the launch of the York St John University's Centre for Language and Social Justice Research (CLSJR) in October 2019, set up to explore why social inequality and injustices are largely enacted through language.

The FFW was held on March 03, 2020 and attended by 23 participants. Facilitated by York Business School's Futures and Foresight Research Group, experts attended from both York universities, The City of York Council, North Yorkshire Police, the York Housing Association, the Ministry of Justice, Leeds Health Trust, Public Health England, the Institute of Directors and Independent experts. Its purpose was to develop scenarios for the year 2030 from which we could develop questions and implications that could be considered by the CLSJR as part of its work, and by participants in their own organisations. The FFW considered the following issues:

- Poverty
- Housing and Rough Sleeping
- Health and Social Care
- Employment and Training

Futures and Foresight

We define Futures and Foresight as:

...the interdisciplinary study and practice of predictable, possible, probable and creative long-term futures.

In this report we consider the findings from the FFW, with a focus on what can be considered

for the next few years. Apart from a predictive approach, most Futures work that considers 10 or more years ahead is based on the premise of multiple possible futures. However, through a process of 'reverse extrapolation', it is possible to discern what might be important to consider sooner than 10 years' time. In this way, Futures is creative a creative process that provides for new actions.

Method



In preparation for the FFW, we completed background papers for participants that considered key factors relevant to each issue in terms of an analysis of patterns and trends. This could include the behaviour of people, technology, geo-politics, regulation and the law, economy, ecology and climate.

Participants worked in groups, collaborating to develop mini-scenarios, and testing the assumptions underpinning the scenarios. Participants were then able to consider actions for the near future which need priority consideration.

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Findings: 1) Poverty in 2030

In the **year 2030** the projection is that the government will have a COBR(A) on poverty. This will entail at least monthly meetings, chaired by the PM her- or him-self, to enable a more holistic approach to deal with the crises. Outcomes will include legislation change of worker rights by encouraging improved Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) among SMEs & MMEs with a focus on removing the "Gig-economy" and instead develop projects to up-skill workers to assure secure jobs and satisfied work force. As well as an increase in social housing, in 2030 there will be a house for everyone classed as "poor". Because of the improvement in social support, work and housing, food banks will be no more.

For the changes in worker rights in 2030, **2025** sees a culture change, with more workers on boards of large organizations, voted in by other workers not chosen by the management. To achieve housing for everyone classed as poor, social Housing in 2025 will need a lot more money to be ringfenced and at the same time strict laws implemented to protect people in private rentals from random rent increases. For the removal of foodbanks, the Universal Credit must now run flawlessly, including immediate access to funding to remove the five week waiting times for first time applicants, and fewer mistakes made in assessing people's needs. The government will have increased the benefit payments to make up for the benefit freeze executed in 2010.

The intensity of the Coronavirus outbreak exposes economic issues around the gig-economy and zero-hour contracts. Many people are unable to earn money, and a huge proportion of people living on the edge by **end 2020**, are now classed as living in poverty. This steep increase in poverty leads to riots at food banks, companies closing due to the economic issues of lack of employees, material and products, and a significant increase in crime. To achieve organisational cultural change for employee empowerment, the Institute for Productivity makes progress in assessing what can be done to improve productivity, upskill workers to assure secure jobs, and to satisfy the work force while still developing economically viable businesses.

By end 2020, viable ideas are presented to the government, who move to acquire expert knowledge on social housing, such as recruiting specialist architects etc. A think tank is set up with a cognitive diverse group of people such as designers, academics, etc. to better answer questions around source materials to build, what style of building etc. By end 2020, the Universal Credit system sees two things happen: 1) A move from big contractors to local ones with better understanding of local problems and opportunities; and 2) Universal Credit collaborates with Citizens Advice organisations who have access to a vast amount of data and therefore can enable more informed decision making.

2) Homelessness, rough sleeping and the national 'housing crisis' in 2030

The **year 2030** sees the end of rough sleeping and homelessness in York. A consequence of this is improved life expectancy and health benefits for the ex-homeless. The use of universally agreed protocols to respond to the needs of at risk groups is accepted by all agencies, and responses to homelessness are person-centred, empathetic and needs-based. There has been a shift in thinking in relation to those engaged in caring professions. Their skills and commitment are valued, and they are actively supported in their work. The institutional structure for tackling 'complex' housing and homelessness issues occurs through inter-disciplinary partnerships, sharing knowledge and budgets effectively, so they can respond speedily to address urgent needs and prevent long term homelessness and rough sleeping.

By **2025**, a range of adequate/affordable accommodation is developed, underpinning the strategy to end homelessness and rough sleeping. There is improved funding of health and social care provision, improving the quality of services, with consequent reductions in demand. Agencies involved with people at risk of homelessness have adopted evidence-based learning. Action is based on learning from experience and is used to plan and inform current and future delivery. The cultural/political shift is evidenced by increased investment in housing, care and support, and a person-centered, local response to tackling social difficulties which lead to homelessness. A key shift is the empowerment and retention of care workers. Working conditions are enhanced, driving an improved care workforce, the support of which drives the ability to plan and improve service provision. Joint training and shared use of technology between agencies is the norm, ending defensive silo working.

By **November 2020**, concern over levels of homelessness and the rough sleeping scandal have led to strategic modular house building and appropriate accommodation planning based on community development knowledge and practice. There is a call for new pilot projects to deliver the end of homelessness in practice, with recognised sanctions against agencies that fail to deliver. Lessons learned reviews must work to establish new ways to a shared commitment to delivery. Local government is called upon to play a central role in backing empowered decision making, and to support planning and action with sustainable long-term funding. The call for additional resources supports a call to increase pay to support the recruitment of care workers. People attracted to the housing, care and support profession develop long-term commitment, expertise and local housing and care knowledge to better address local needs. There is a call to harmonise data recording and IT systems to ensure agencies communicate effectively and develop coordinated and timely approaches to meet urgent housing and support needs and prevent homelessness.

3) Health and social care in 2030

The **year 2030** sees the creation of a collective global parliament (GP) on health and social care (HSC) issues – the first concrete example of global inclusive and representative democracy. The GP(HSC) enshrines in its constitution the principles of a fairer society, building on the WHO concept of Universal Health Coverage. It provides primary legislation to ensure people of all nations can access the health and care services they need, without risk of impoverishment. The GP(HSC) adopts the GINI coefficient and other measures to confirm levels of global resources available for ordinary and extra-ordinary care provision, with national (minimum) targets to be reported annually. The GP(HSC)'s membership is a political and voted on by national popular vote. Eligibility for membership precludes any person who has been a member of any national government within a 10-year period immediately prior to appointment to a single 5-year term. One of the first acts of the GP(HSC) is to pass legislation to be implemented by all governments to prioritise a prevention approach to health and social care needs, and to ensure minimum percentage of national GDP is invested in resources and efforts to deliver equality of care outcomes.

By 2025, the UK is still reeling from the aftereffects of the 20/21 coronavirus pandemic. Post-pandemic analysis has provided a better understanding of equitable health and social care outcomes. A new populist political party sweeps aside the reigning, subdued Conservative party, and a (still) divided Labour party. The manifesto of this new party sets 'future-focused' policies, building on adoption of The Future Generations Act (Wales) of 2015. By early 2025, a referendum date is set to provide options to change the nation's voting system. The new political party is symptomatic of a wider national and global social movement, drawing on what they see as examples of the world's best practices. Alongside the Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015, other examples being lifted to global prominence by the social movement coalition include New Zealand's 2019 Wellbeing Budget. Nationally, the movement's call for investment in social health crisis prevention, is acknowledged by the new government's desire to increase taxation as the only sustainable means of increased investment in social equity.

By the **end of 2020**, the UK reels under the (manageable) coronavirus pandemic. Public concerns reach new heights, including over the perceived trend of political rewarding. Mass participation provides a new social movement for change. The government at least uplifts and ringfences the public health budget. But with a solid majority, and little cohesive opposition, it is not under threat. The growing social movement mobiles a new form of politics and quickly eclipses and embraces groups such as 'Extinction Rebellion' and 'Pause the System'. There is a call for more progressive taxation and a redistribution of assets and income.

4) Employment and skills in 2030:

Year 2030 welcomes income levels that eliminate poverty. This is reflected in increased local health and wellbeing-levels, due to successful implementation of a guaranteed minimum income policy, irrespective of an individual's employment or retirement status. With a healthy workforce, and greater attention to individual well-being, York and its region witnesses greater workforce engagement and increased productivity. The (previous) trend for increasing work hours and lower pay is reversed locally, and many York and regional organisations experience shorter/reduced working weeks. Levels of economic inactivity fall and there is greater diversity in a more inclusive workforce.

By 2025, government policy allows the region to establish a guaranteed minimum income policy covering both employment and retirement. It is accompanied by new national directives on working hours and greater health and safety legislation. The Health and Safety Act 2024 fully embraces workplace mental health and safety, with new powers granted to monitor and control workplace health and safety. Budgets are increased to allow greater public investment in resources required to exercise new Health and Safety powers. Better financial support is available to the SME sector to embrace workforce diversity and inclusivity, through training and support for reasonable adjustments. Legislation increases responsibility on the individual to contribute to their own health and safety outcomes – with greater definition of concepts such as contributory negligence. A new agency (with relevant powers) co-ordinates workforce engagement (in-work/out-of-work).

By the **end of 2020**, concern over the dominant trends of unchecked technological innovation and the paradox of longer working hours, lower pay levels, increasing levels of workforce stress, and continually falling productivity, combine with increased evidence of greater nationalistic systematisation on a global scale. This generates a strong call for action among bodies such as the City of York Council, the North Yorkshire LEP and the NP11. There is a call for clarity on regulatory bodies that might mitigate some, if not all, of these concerns. In turn, this generates a need for clarity in definitions and long-term objectives. For example, what is meant by concepts such as poverty, living wage and guaranteed minimum income. The need for diversity and inclusion is accepted, but there is poor understanding of it in the SME sector – comprising much of the local and regional work force. However, the need for financial resources to overcome this problem is acknowledged by all. It is not one sided. It is accepted that the individual must take greater responsibility for their own outcomes. This requires adjustments to education and training programmes. The challenges ahead are significant and require a strong, co-ordinated voice. There is a call for action to establish an agency for sustainable economic development, with a remit to address a stressed regional employment system.



Implications

Each scenario generated a set of possible outcomes and pathways towards these, starting in November 2020. Also, the report has been completed as the Covid19 virus pandemic has unfolded. Daily responses to what is a largely unknown and unpredictable issue, have their own implications for any consideration of social justice futures. Nevertheless, we studied the implications of the scenarios, principally for consideration by the Centre for Language and Social Justice Research at YSJ, but also by the range of institutions represented at the FFW.

Among the implications for Poverty were the identified need for an holistic solution for social housing. A think tank across disciplines needs to investigate innovation around buildings, materials, etc. Also, there was seen to be a need to re-gain social housing expertise within the government, and a need to make the most of the new Institute for productivity, to solve issues around employee working conditions.

The implications for Housing and Rough Sleeping include a need for an ideological and political shift, from normalising the interconnected issues and their drivers to a serious commitment to tackle them. Also, the FFW identified a need for treasury funding to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping while the numbers involved are relatively small. Addressing the wider housing system issues will require ideological change and significant long-term funding.

Among the implications for Health and Social Care, the FFW found the need to realise a more just health and social care service regionally. This must follow from a new

national, economically viable and sustainable (integrated) care model. This will require a new culture in which the greater proportion of the UK population embrace the fact that it is time to accept that we need to pay more if we want more. Also, we must better understand the relationship between social care and health. Prevention is better than cure and we must therefore consider that it is no longer viable to maintain the arbitrary split in national and regional funding

Finally, the FFW found that for better quality Employment and Training, we may need to accept that our region remains a predominantly hospitality, tourism and agricultural-based economy. This does not preclude an enhanced knowledge-based economy but suggests a better focus. Also, employers must be enabled to make more effective use of their own resources to develop their workforce to its full potential. This will require support for the employer (and individual) to take responsibility for life-long learning for an indeterminate future.

The challenges that the questions and their potential answers reveal are non-trivial, complex, inter-dependent and urgent. What needs to be done? Now? Certainly, the establishment of some form of agency for the co-ordination of action would be a significant start. However, the challenges faced by York and its environs require greater visibility, to appeal to a unity of purpose. Here, initiatives such as the Centre for Language and Social Justice Research at YSJ have a role to play, but they are no substitute for lighting the fires of concern amongst the potential stakeholders who can influence change.