

THRIVING

*The Child Poverty Strategy for
Leeds 2019-2022*

Welcome!

As the Executive Member for Children and Families, I am proud of our ambition for Leeds to be the best city in the UK for children and young people to grow up in. The Best Council Plan highlights our commitment to being a Child Friendly City. Through our vision outlined in the Leeds Children and Young People's Plan 2018-2023, we will improve the outcomes for children and young people in the city.

We are committed to challenging child poverty in Leeds, which includes an acknowledgment of the scale and impact of poverty on children, young people and families. Poverty is not just the absence of food, warmth, housing, clothes and toiletries- it is the discrimination, the exclusion, and the de-humanising manner in which people who live with poverty are treated. Poverty is a day to day reality that results in people living precarious lives, with every decision evaluated- it is not, however, an individual fault. Poverty is the result of a political and societal failing.

Our strategy is based around mitigating the impact of poverty, and working with organisations to reduce the barriers that children, young people and families who live in poverty may experience, but I am very aware that to make a substantial, long term difference to the percentage of children who live in poverty, there needs to be a government in power who prioritises resources, time and policies to tackle child poverty.

Poverty can have a catastrophic impact on children and families, and the percentage of children who are living in poverty across the UK is increasing. We can only understand the impact of poverty on children and young people through listening to children and young people who have experience of poverty.

Under the Thriving approach, Leeds will join up the work being done across the city, championing and sharing the good work already being done to mitigate the impact of child poverty and drawing everyone together under a common strategic goal. It will develop new work to address any gaps in provision effectively. The impact work streams represent the areas of focus, and we envisage between one and three projects to be implemented over a two year period under each. This will work hand in hand with the Child Poverty Impact Board, a city wide governance board that will apply robust measures and targets to reduce the negative impact of child poverty.

We will work with third sector, public sector, private sector, academies, schools, further and higher education, children, young people, families and communities to mitigate the impact of poverty on children's experiences and lives.

I am very proud of all the work being done across the city with children, young people and families to make a difference to their lives. I would like to thank everyone involved in this work, and I look forward to working with you and new partners to take the Thriving approach forwards.

Councillor Fiona Venner,

Executive Member of Children & Families



How do we define poverty?

When we talk about poverty, we are talking about relative poverty. The definition that is most commonly used is Townsend's definition: *“Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities, and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged or approved, in the societies to which they belong. Their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary patterns, customs and activities”* (Townsend, 1979: 31)

This definition is commonly used because it describes a wider understanding of poverty, and shows that poverty isn't just about what you have, or what you don't have, its about what you possess in comparison to what the society around you has. When we use the term 'exclusion', it means that one of the huge impacts of having less than others around you is that you cannot access the same opportunities, resources or activities as others, so you feel inadequate and ashamed.

Who experiences poverty?

Anyone can experience poverty. Someone may be born into poverty, grow up in poverty, live life in poverty and die in poverty. Some people may never experience poverty, and some people will live life going in and out of poverty. Some people may experience poverty just once, but feel the impact for the rest of their life. There are some groups who are more vulnerable than others, such as people who have special educational needs and disabilities, women, and people who are Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic– these groups are overrepresented in poverty statistics.

What are the statistics?

Over 170,000 people in Leeds are estimated to be in relative poverty after housing costs. In 2016/17 there were an estimated 4.1 million children living in relative poverty across the UK. In Leeds, 20% of all dependent children under the age of 20 (33,485 children) lived in relative poverty in 2016, in comparison to 17% nationally. These figures are likely to be under-representative of the true number of children in poverty. Adults being out of work is often said to be the main cause of child poverty- however, across the UK, 70% of children who are in poverty were from a household where at least one person was in work in 2018.



What are the impacts of poverty?

Children who experience poverty are more likely to face a wide range of difficulties, both now and in the future. There are strong links between experiencing poverty as a child and having worse mental and physical health, a shorter life, lower grades in education, poor financial health and lower paid, insecure work. Stress and worry can be caused by not having access to basic materials, such as toiletries, clothes, shoes, medication and food. Living in food insecure households can result in hunger, malnutrition and obesity.

Why is child poverty different to adult poverty?

The ways in which poverty is experienced by children cannot be understood through solely looking at adult poverty. To understand how poverty impacts the lives of children and young people, we need to talk to children and young people. Similarly, we cannot just focus on eradicating adult poverty as the solution to child poverty. We need to focus on mitigating the impact of poverty on children and young people- whilst we work as a city to improve the structures around people who experience, or are at risk of, poverty.



Why is poverty 'everyone's business'?

The cost of poverty to the UK is approximately £78 billion per year. To tackle the impact and cost poverty has on individual's lives, it costs £69 billion- £1 in every £5 of all spending on public services (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Counting the cost of UK Poverty, 2016). If we, as a city, do not act the risk is one that is both moral and economical- Poverty creates an unequal and inequitable system, which not only brings increased cost to all of our services, it also holds the moral cost of restricting the realities of Leeds citizens.

How does poverty relate to the rights of a child?

Poverty represents a loss of the rights of the child. The UN Convention Rights of the Child details 54 articles that cover all aspects of a child's life. Six are particularly relevant to child poverty; articles 3, 6, 12, 24, 26 and 27. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has said that all children living in poverty are vulnerable, but some groups are particularly vulnerable. These include:

Younger children, indigenous children
immigrant children and children living in single parent households.



What do we want?

We know that being in poverty, being excluded and feeling ashamed can impact a child for the rest of their life. We don't want this in Leeds. We don't want any of our children, young people or families to feel excluded, alone, misunderstood, or ashamed. We want to ensure that poverty presents no barriers for our children and young people, and we want all people to have access to the same opportunities, regardless of their background. We believe that all children and young people should have the freedom to choose their pathway, and that we can work together as a city to tackle limitations that poverty may place on these pathways. So we are working together, as a city, to reduce the impact of poverty on young people.

What is needed to make a difference?



Who is needed to make a difference?

'Thriving' is based on the belief that it is fundamentally important to incorporate the voices of children, young people and their parents into plans, strategies and work. There is fantastic work being done across the city— but there are bubbles of frustration within and across different systems and organisations. So we need to change those systems and organisations. We need to look at what the children, young people and parents want and need before we look at what organisations historically provide.

To address and improve the issue of poverty, a revolutionary approach is needed. We cannot make meaningful change unless we work together, tying in the intelligence, resources and work that is being done across the city to develop new knowledge and assess what makes the most difference, and why. We need everyone to get on board— children, young people, families, communities, schools, academies, education settings, private sectors, third sectors, public sectors, universities, faith groups, not for profit organisations & any other partners.

Our ambitions

We will be innovative, together, to break down the barriers that poverty creates.

We will be brave, together, to revolutionise the way that Leeds works with children, young people & families who live in poverty.

We will fight, together, to ensure that every child & young person who experiences poverty can thrive.

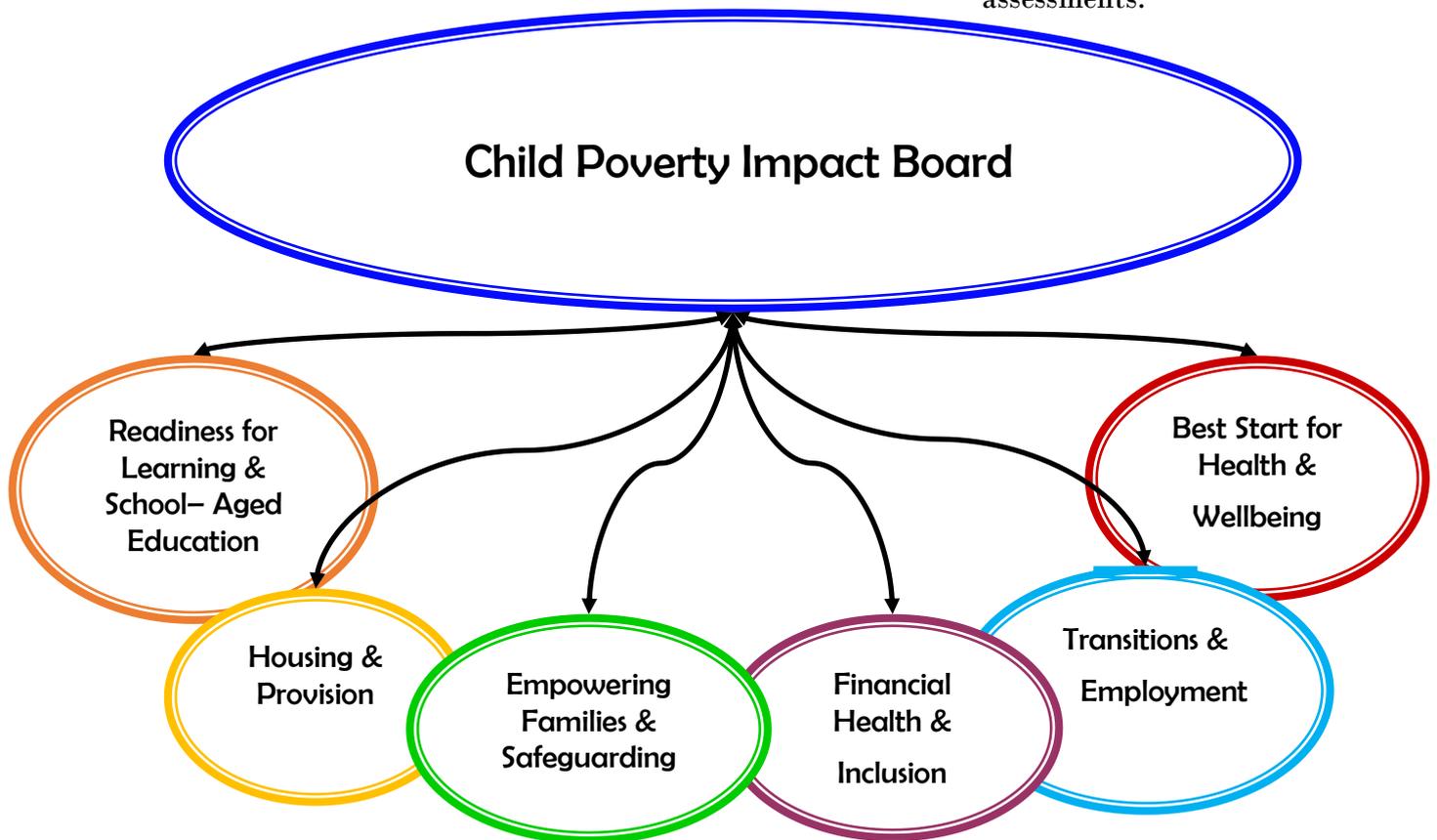


What is the Leeds approach?

We are creating inclusive, equal partnerships who use their knowledge and expertise to investigate the impact of poverty on a specific area of children's lives, and then work together to create projects that mitigate this impact. These partnerships incorporate research based intelligence with policies and projects to assess the most effective low cost, high impact solutions to improving the lives of children and young people in poverty.

What does this look like?

There are two parts to this work: The Child Poverty Impact Board, which is a city wide governance board that will apply robust measures and targets to reduce the negative impact of child poverty, and six Impact Workstreams. The workstreams will focus on improving a specific area of young people's lives that is affected by poverty. Each workstream will have between one and three projects to be implemented over a two year period. The workstreams will report to the Child Poverty Impact Board, with project plans and impact assessments.



Projects Overview

Financial Health & Inclusion

Best Start for Health & Wellbeing

Healthy Holidays: grant scheme to provide activities & meals for children over holidays
Council Advice Contract: improving access to advice in a range of settings
Leeds Credit Union School Savings Clubs; helping children understand how to manage their money

Best Beginnings: aims to enhance early parenting capacity and increase breastfeeding
Perinatal education programmes: provides a city wide education offer to parents. Next steps include making sure that the programme is taken up by those with the greatest need

Housing & Provision

Overcrowded homes: working with a range of partners to improve the quality of homes and to reduce overcrowded properties

Readiness for Learning & School- Aged Education

Empowering Families & Safeguarding

50 Things to do Before 5: developing vocabulary through learning activities
Attendance, Wellbeing & Period Poverty: developing schemes with young people around attendance & wellbeing
3As: Working with schools to improve attendance, achievement & attainment

Transitions & Employment

Poverty Proofing Practice: developing a framework for social workers & staff to understand the impacts of poverty and work differently with children & families who are experiencing poverty

Employment & Skills and Children's Centres: integrating employability support with childcare, to increase the number of parents taking up the offer for 2 year olds, improve adult education and provide debt advice



Leeds City Council Strategies

Tackling poverty and inequality is central to plans and strategies across the council, and having a strong economy in a compassionate city is key to the Best Council Plan. The Children & Young Peoples Plan has tackling the impact of child poverty at the heart of the strategy, and fantastic work is being done through the localities approach in Communities & Environments. Two high profile city-wide strategies are the Inclusive Growth Strategy and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. These remain the two anchors of activity being undertaken in the council and the city. Each of them recognises both the city's achievements and its remaining challenges around poverty and inequalities.

Best Council Plan: <https://www.leeds.gov.uk/docs/BCP%2018-21%20whole%20plan%20FINAL.pdf>

Children & Young People's Plan: <https://www.leeds.gov.uk/childfriendlyleeds/Documents/CMT18-022%20Childrens%20and%20YP%20Plan%2018-23.pdf>

Health & Wellbeing strategy: <https://www.leeds.gov.uk/docs/Health%20and%20Wellbeing%202016-2021.pdf>

Inclusive Growth Strategy: <http://www.leedsgrowthstrategy.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Leeds-Inclusive-Growth->

Leeds Poverty Truth Commission

“Nothing about us, without us, is for us”

The Leeds Poverty Truth Commission (<http://www.leedspovetrytruth.org.uk>) aims to ensure that people who have experienced poverty first-hand are at the heart of how the city thinks and acts in tackling poverty and inequality. This work brings together civic and business decision makers and ‘experts by experience’ of poverty in Leeds to build relationships, share experiences and think how we could respond to poverty more effectively. The Poverty Truth Commission have created ground-breaking work that has made a significant impact in starting conversations around a different approach.

A Different Take

Through a partnership with CATCH, University of Leeds, Child Poverty Action Group and Leeds City Council, a panel of ‘experts by experience’ has been set up— a group of children, young people and parents who have experience of living on a low income or in a less advantaged area. The group are conducting peer research to gather perspectives and views on the ways poverty impacts people's lives. They are working to change the narrative on poverty, and the panel are core to the development of some projects within the ‘Thriving’ Approach.



How will we know we are making a difference?

Universities and students are aligned to each project to research the impact, looking at the difference the projects have made either in terms of numbers and statistics, experiences and feelings, or both! Projects have a set of goals that they will aim to reach, but there will also be work to look at any positive differences that the projects have made that may not be included in the goals. The voices of children, young people and parents are integral to the development, the carrying out and the assessment of the projects. If projects are found to have made no difference, they will be replaced with another project

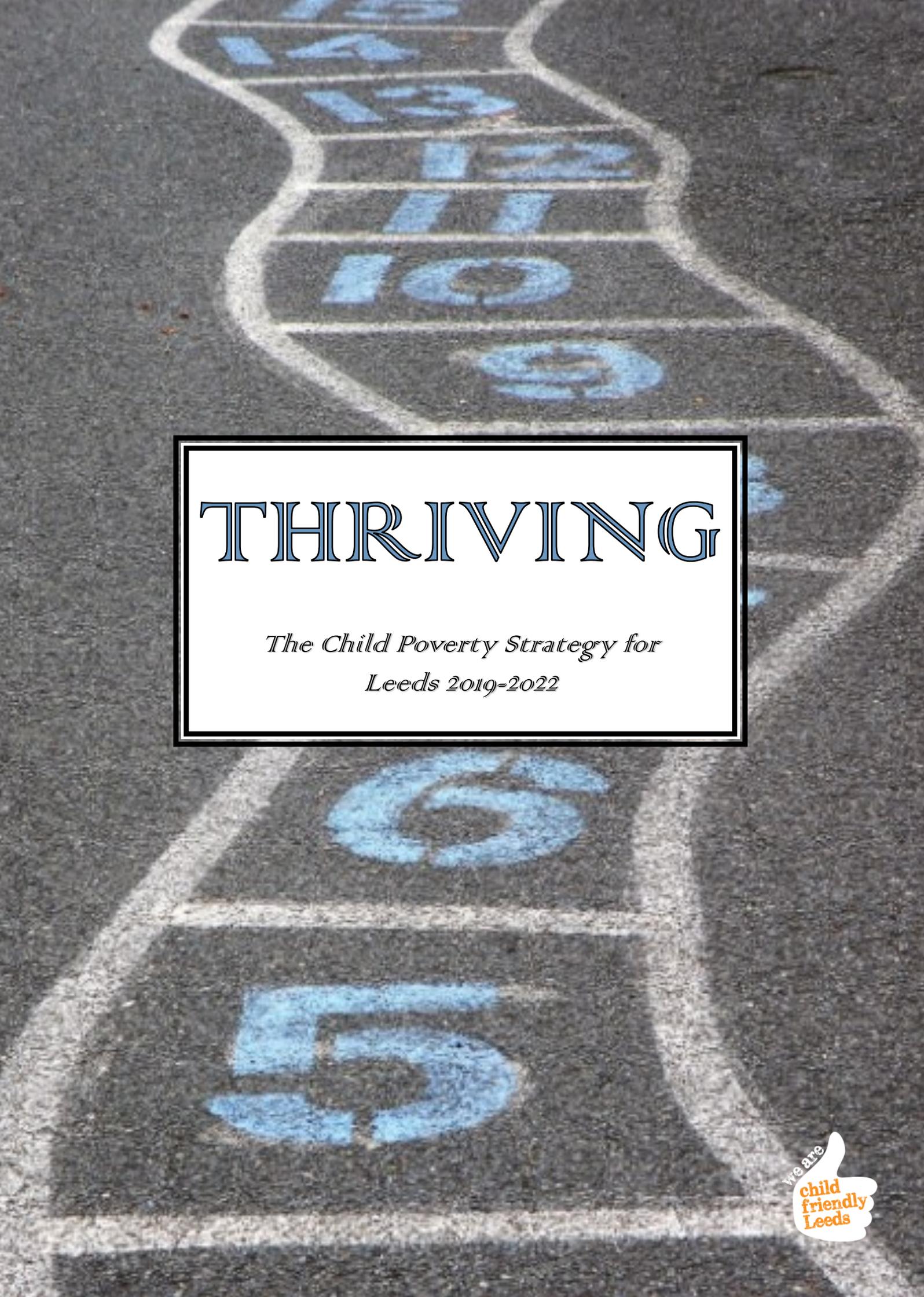
What's next?

Some of the projects are building on pre-existing work, and some are new projects. All contain the principles of working in partnership, using the voices of children, young people and parents, being research based and assessing impact. The strategy is built on the work of the Poverty Truth Commission, and it has been developed with a panel of children, young people and parents who have experience of living on a low income. We will continue to build partnerships, create awareness of poverty, and work to make a difference to people who experience poverty.

How can you get involved?

We want to get as many people as possible involved, from all areas of Leeds. We know that we cannot make anything better without working with people who experience poverty. We want to work with children, young people, families and communities, to make sure that all of our work is led by experiences and opinions— so we would love to hear from you. The fantastic work that goes on in Leeds by the third, public, academic and private sector is essential, and a joined up, equitable partnership is invaluable. Schools, academies and education settings are crucial in improving the lives and outcomes of children— and we need to have a better understanding of what can be done outside school that has a substantial impact on life and learning in school. To get involved, or for more information, please email: Amelia.Gunn@leeds.gov.uk





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