



Putting people at the heart of decision-making – update on progress in planning the Big Leeds Chat 2021

Background

Within Leeds we have an ambition, led by our People's Voices Group (PVG), to think about how the voice of people, especially the voice of inequalities, is at the heart of all levels of our health and care decision making.

One of the first ways that we started this as a joined-up Leeds health and care system was via the Big Leeds Chat. A new and innovative way of hearing from people, bringing decision makers together with people, as one health and care team, going to where people are and listening to what was important to them. We asked three simple opening questions:

1. what do you love about Leeds?
2. what do you do to stay well?
3. how do we become the best city for health and wellbeing?

Much of the value of the Big Leeds Chat are the conversations that went on from those opening questions in terms of insight and understanding of how it feels to live, work or visit Leeds from a person's perspective.

The first Big Leeds Chat (BLC) took place in October 2018 at Kirkgate Market and involved all health and care partners and senior leaders coming together to listen to people in the market, with over 500 conversations taking place.

For the next BLC in November 2019 we further developed it to wanting to hear the voice of those people who experience inequalities and from people in their communities too. We included a number of local Big Leeds Local Chats linked to LCPs (Local Care Partnerships) as well as going to community- based settings such as local food banks.

Both of these BLCs resulted in the intelligence being used in a variety of ways including giving direction to the Health and Wellbeing board work programme. But there were also wider benefits in terms of culturally feeling like one health and care team, and also looking like one health and care team. Many senior leaders who can often be one or more steps removed from the front-line were able to gain first-hand insight into what was happening for people, some of who were emotionally moved as a result of what they heard which led to a positive change in their approach to work. There was a strengthened commitment to the importance of people's and community voices being at the heart of our health and care thinking and decision-making.

As we come out of the Covid 19 pandemic, it feels like an appropriate time to be going out to communities to listen to how they are and understand what is important to them as we move forward as a city. There are other drivers as well that we could seek to bring into our conversations with people.



The previous two BLCs told us as leaders how important it was to people that we supported people in Leeds with their **mental health**, as well as **improving access to services**, and the importance of **good quality jobs** on people's wellbeing. We know the impact of living through the pandemic has impacted on us all, and it is likely that all three of these areas have been negatively affected because of it. So, it is timely to have a Big Leeds Chat to allow local people to reflect on their health and wellbeing in a post-pandemic environment, and for senior leaders to hear first-hand experiences of local people.

We also know that people who traditionally live with the biggest health inequalities have been adversely affected by the pandemic, both in terms of geographical communities, and communities of interest. So, having a platform to enable these local people to influence health and care at a local level, through the LCPs, is a key element of LCPs succeeding. Local BLCs are one way in which people's voices are at the heart of community-level decision making.

Whilst we have the opportunity to use online channels to deliver engagement events as part of the BLC, face-to-face events are still the preferred choice for engagement, both because of the quality of conversation, but also so that we can engage with some of the digitally excluded people - especially important as more health and care services have moved to digital platforms as a result of the pandemic.

Big Leeds Chat 2021

The PVG have spent the last few months agreeing the best ways in which to deliver a successful BLC this year, with more consideration given to the risks associated with the Covid-19 pandemic – we want to hear from local people in a safe way. It was agreed that this year the emphasis should be on delivering more smaller BLC events across the city, particularly in communities where people live with the biggest health inequalities.

As such, BLC this year will be delivered as a 'road show', with the aim of delivering one BLC event in each of the **LCP areas** during September and October. Further, to ensure we are listening to the voices of people living with the biggest health inequalities, we will also host BLC events with specific **communities of interest**. We were successful with similar events during BLC 2019, but this year we want to scale those events up, so that we have more events across the whole city.

In addition, we want to put more efforts into hearing the voices of **children and young people** – especially important given the disruption the pandemic has had on their lives. We have been working closely with YouthWatch, and with Child Friendly Leeds, to develop BLC events that are targeted at CYP and are delivered in a way that works for that audience.

Finally, this year we are exploring options for a **digital event**. Whilst one of the key benefits of the BLC has been the face-to-face contact between senior leaders and local people, there is no doubt that acceptance of digital platforms has grown during the pandemic with some communities – therefore we feel this is an opportunity worth exploring. This will be a 'digital festival' type event, with an emphasis on hosting online wellbeing events and classes; attendees will then also be encouraged to take part in a 'chat'.



Given the past 18 months, we feel it is important to give people the opportunity to 'debrief' about their experiences of living through the pandemic. Therefore, this year we have decided to slightly change the three questions, and this time will ask:

- How has it been for you over the past 18 months?
- What things would help you improve your health and wellbeing?
- What could make your area a happier and healthier place to live?

It's important to remember, these questions are meant as 'conversation starters' to enable senior leaders and chat makers to have a conversation with people about what matters to them.

Given the current risks associated with the pandemic, and perhaps a reluctance from local people to engage with a big event, it has been decided that for this year the flagship Kirkgate Market event will not take place.

Get involved

Planning for BLC2021 is being led by Healthwatch Leeds and the Health Partnerships Team, with support from the BLC Working Group (a sub-group of PVG) and the LCP Development Team. However, to make the events successful we need volunteers from across the health and care system to take part in the events – especially **senior leaders** and **chat makers**. Without these, the events will not be able to go ahead.

At each BLC event, it is the role of the senior leaders to listen to local people – to listen to their experiences during the pandemic, to listen to their experiences of using health and care services, and to listen to what matters most to them in maintaining a healthy (or healthier) life. It is these discussions that provide senior leaders with important insight to inform the way they go about their day jobs.

The role of the chat maker is to support the senior leaders in those discussions, and to make a record of those conversations. This is an essential role on the day and is key to ensuring we have some intelligence to evaluate after the event. Anybody who works in health and care can be a chat maker, and the BLC provides an opportunity to develop your own knowledge of what it feels like for our local people right now.

All volunteers will be provided with an online pre-briefing session and the materials you need to support you to successfully hold 'chats' with members of the public.

As explained, there are numerous events taking place this year, and we need your support to make them a success. **If you can volunteer some of your time, please email blcontour2021@gmail.com or call 0113 898 0035.** Once you have registered to take part as a senior leader or chat maker we will contact you with available dates and locations of events, and you can choose one that works best for you.

Post BLC 2021

After we have hosted all BLC 2021 events, all the qualitative insight collected through the chats will be collated and analysed. A report will be produced in early 2022 which highlights the key



themes that have emerged, as well as providing recommendations. This report will be made available on the Big Leeds Chat web pages, and will be shared with key decision-making bodies, including the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Partnership Executive Group.

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