

LEEDS STRATEGIC COST OF LIVING PLAN

This plan outlines the response to the Cost-of-Living crisis by Leeds City Council and partners. The aim of the plan is set out how as a city we are working together to harness the capacity and capability in Leeds, our communities and those with lived experience to develop a city solution to welfare provision and addressing the cost-of-living crisis.

This plan will ensure that the council maintains the infrastructure to respond to short term crisis and use collaborative approaches to build resilience for medium and long terms.

	Action Area	Progress update
1	Governance and oversight	
1.1	Strategic and Operational groups with cross sector representation	<p>The following strategic and operational groups with representatives from across Council, NHS, DWP, third sector and wider public sector, have been established and have been meeting since September 2022;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Cost of Living meeting- Directors and senior leaders meeting every quarter • Cost of Living and Welfare Board- Senior Officers and partners meeting every two weeks • Task and finish groups with specific focus on; integrated communication, information, advice and guidance, practical support, funding and reporting. • Financial Inclusion steering group- meetings stepped up to fortnightly to ensure wider partners and services experiences have been taken into account and key messages disseminated.
2	Communications and engagement	
2.1	Together Leeds Cost of Living webpage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Together Leeds Cost of Living webpage www.leeds.gov.uk/costofliving which is a one stop shop for all cost-of-living information and advice. It includes sections on; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Finances- Link to Money Information Centre www.leedsmic.org.uk ○ Heating ○ Water ○ Housing ○ Warm spaces (separate page created and mapping added) ○ Help in hubs ○ Health ○ Food

APPENDIX 2

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Events- Cost of Living filter added to the Leeds Directory to provide details of events/ activities by postcode ● Cost of Living artwork developed to work in tandem with Winter Wellbeing campaign ● Together Leeds brand used to continue the city-wide team approach ● This has resulted in the webpage receiving 21,704 page views and 17,067 unique page views between 1 October and 31 December ●
2.2	Social media and online campaigns for Together Leeds Cost of Living	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Developed social media content plan, which included ongoing organic and paid social media across all channels, this has resulted in 237,044 impressions; 5,127 link clicks; 1,756 shares/RTs across all platforms between 1 October and 31 December ● Gov delivery direct emails to over 100k residents reinstated fortnightly, with an average of 40% of recipients opening and roughly 4,000 clicking on links for further information. ● Promoting free and low-cost activities for people each week (particularly for families in run up to Christmas)
2.3	Offline Together Leeds Cost of Living campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Radio advertising campaign (4 weeks) ● Outdoor adverts including free/low-cost billboards and digital screens ● Posters on local community boards signposting to libraries and community hubs, or website ● Posters and flyers to all our children’s centres and nurseries ● Posters for Warm Space venues ● 3,000 leaflets through doors in key areas (localities team) ● 1,000 leaflets through doors in high rises and other homes in Inner East Leeds and other areas (Housing team)
2.4	Letter to Chancellor of the Exchequer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Letter sent on 10th January stating city concerns on the cost-of-living crisis, it’s impacts on the people of Leeds and its services, setting out key funding asks and specific issues to be addressed. Send from the Leader of the Council and the Executive Member for Communities and co-signed by organisations across Leeds.

APPENDIX 2

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter shared with key local media contacts, resulting interviews with the Leader and Radio Leeds, Calendar and YEP.
2.5	PR	<p>Positive press response to the launch of our Warm Spaces. This will continue to form a key part of our work to help residents struggling with the cost-of-living crisis. We're also focusing on good news stories such as the success of the winter coat appeal and heating on prescription pilot.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All 36 'warm places' in Leeds you can visit to avoid using your central heating this winter as cost of living crisis bites - Leeds Live (leeds-live.co.uk) Leeds warm spaces: The full list of everywhere you can go to keep warm for free this winter Yorkshire Evening Post Where can I keep warm this winter? Our guide to warm spaces in West Leeds... - West Leeds Dispatch Leeds Warm Spaces Map - Network Leeds Where to find a 'warm space' in Leeds amid rising energy bills ITV News Calendar Full list of Bradford's Warm Spaces and opening times this December Bradford Telegraph and Argus (thetelegraphandargus.co.uk) Leeds residents donate 3,500 winter coats to help vulnerable people this winter Yorkshire Evening Post
2.6	Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State of the city –the annual event was held on 7 December 2022 in the Leeds Civic Hall, organised and hosted by Leeds City Council and attended by 160 people from a wide range of city partners including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 49 locally elected councillors across political parties 33 representatives from organisations within the Leeds Anchors Network including Leeds City Council, Leeds City College, Leeds Trinity University, University of Leeds, Leeds Beckett University, Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust, Leeds Teaching Hospital Trust and Northern Gas Networks 11 private sector representatives 49 people from across the community, voluntary and faith sector including community organisations, housing associations, advice organisations and people with lived experience The event was designed to encourage a city-wide conversation about what is already being done in response (that can be shared and rolled out further) and where Leeds can work together to go further, within available means and resources in order to minimise the impacts of rising living costs on the poorest residents, support businesses and organisations through economic shocks, particularly

APPENDIX 2

		<p>those that are most vulnerable, many of which will be in our third sector and build greater security for the city’s future. The full evaluation of the event is attached at appendix 3.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community events being held across the city signposting people to relevant support and advice including via LCC Community Hubs, Local Care Partnership and Public Health teams in school settings • Inclusive Anchor Financial Wellbeing week: Coordinated by Leeds City Council in partnership with Inclusive Anchor partners (largest organisations in the city), the first Inclusive Anchor Financial Wellbeing week was hosted in October 2022, with around 250 employees from anchor organisations attending sessions. The sessions covered a wide range of topics, including improving energy efficiency in the home, money and menopause and cooking on a budget. • Meeting of Housing Association partners (led by Housing Leeds) to share the city’s Cost of Living work and provide an opportunity for Housing Associations to share issues and impacts.
2.7	Housing Leeds – Winter/Christmas campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The campaign began on 3rd October and is centred around support/ advice with early customer contact and interventions on arrears cases and linked into wider corporate messages / themes. • Local Housing Offices have developed campaigns, tailored to their resources and customer needs. • Communications campaign/ social media promoting partner agencies events and general financial advice/ money saving ideas. • Area Teams have organised local events with partner agencies to provide advice and support. These have been held using the mobile office on estates or in community venues.
2.8	Housing Leeds ‘We’re Here to Help’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme running through Housing Leeds campaign, communications, email footers and posters. • Key message - helping tenants to access benefits and other support to ease financial hardship – included within each month’s tenant email. • Restated commitment that ‘no one in Leeds will lose their council home because of financial hardship where they are positively engaging to get their payments back on track, and making payments in line with a planned arrangement’. • Continued partnership working with Leeds Credit Union to make effective use of the Money and Advice Budgeting Services (MABS)

APPENDIX 2

3 Information, Advice and Guidance		
3.1	Leeds Money Information Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leeds Money Information Centre website details of free, independent, and confidential advice and support in Leeds. • All information reflects the current situation and is updated regularly. • New integrated mapping- includes all advice points, food aid map, where to access digital services, Leeds School Uniform Exchange, Winter Coats, and Warm Space map. • Physical resources available including flyers (including translations), concertinas and business cards. • Over 70,000 resources have been distributed to organisations including council services, NHS and health settings, DWP, third sector and universities between October 2022 and January 2023.
3.2	Google drive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure there is awareness amongst frontline services of the support available in the city and key messages around the cost-of-living crisis a google drive which can be shared across organisations has been created. • There are themed folders on Communications, Money, Housing, Health, Food and Energy. There is also a folder with training and awareness videos on key themes and information on how to order physical resources.
3.3	Training and awareness raising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suite of themed awareness video have been developed to be shared with frontline staff and volunteers on key subjects including advice and support, energy, mental health. These are also included within the google drive. • Financial Inclusion Team have delivered training and awareness sessions to a wide range of council (including elected members) and health services, between October 2022 and January 2023, reaching an estimated 2000 people. This has included; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Adult Social Care- Better Lives Board, Better Together, Forum for Race Equality in Social care and Health ○ Childrens Services: Social care staff, Directors Development session ○ Communities, Housing & Environment: Leadership forum, Housing Associations, Migration Partnership ○ Resources: Shared services staff ○ Health: Heath and Wellbeing Board, Public Health Want to Know More About session, Local Care Partnership, Target conference video, Primary Care Network Fuel poverty and support

APPENDIX 2

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Elected members: Community Committees Chairs, Inner North East workshop ○ City partnerships: Leeds Debt Forum, DWP Leeds staff, Leeds Food Aid Network, Leeds Community Anchor Network
4	Practical Support	
4.1	Debt Relief Orders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Financial Inclusion team have recently commissioned a new pilot to support people who may require access to a debt relief order. A debt relief order can help people who have significant debts of up to £30,000k, to have breathing space from creditors for up to 12 months for them to improve their longer-term position. A barrier to accessing this support is that people must pay a £90 admin fee to have a DRO set up. Often this is unaffordable. ● The pilot will pay this fee for people who cannot afford to pay it themselves, ensuring they can access the DRO. Ebor Gardens Advice Centre will administer the £90 fee to all advice agencies in the city who will pay this on behalf of people they are supporting. This pilot will have quarterly review meetings in place to ensure it is running effectively.
4.2	Heating on Prescription	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Leeds Heating on prescription pilot will focus on supporting clinically vulnerable patients who have conditions which are likely to be exacerbated by living in a cold environment. Referral pathways include: Virtual Wards, PCNs, LTHT, Leeds York Partnership Foundation Trust, Neighbourhood Networks. ● Funding applied will increase the capacity of Leeds Green Doctors service. All patients referred into the scheme will have access to an enhanced fuel support offer, which depending upon individual circumstances will enable them to heat their homes as much as required through the remaining winter months of Feb/March (fuel support offered may scale up/down accordingly). ● Wrap around support will also be offered in terms of income saving and advice, energy use and health and wellbeing.
4.3	Local Welfare Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Designed to support residents in an emergency or crisis - short term support such as supermarket voucher, fuel voucher, white goods, furniture or flooring. The Local Welfare Support Scheme has been under review since August Key changes to the scheme include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Revised eligibility criteria - providing more equitable access in line with current cost of living. (Actioned)

APPENDIX 2

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Enhanced fuel support offer – which has seen fuel awards increased in response to current energy costs and wider energy efficiency advice offered with every fuel award. (Actioned) ○ Introduction of direct and third-party online referrals – to open up application methods and reduce pressure on Contact Centre. (In development) ○ Introduction of a person-centred support programme - that will connect customers to wider support services in Leeds, e.g. debt management, benefits advice or budgeting support. (In development)
4.4	Warm Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A network of over 180 locations have been established including all LCC community hubs and libraries. All offer a space where people can gather for free in a warm, safe, and welcoming space. ● Over 65% of the Leeds population are within a 10-minute walk of a Warm Space. ● Voluntary Action Leeds are distributing funding from the West Yorkshire Mayoral Fund to support third sector and faith based Warm Spaces. ● The first funding round (£150k allocated) covered organisations that had joined the map by 9 December and includes payments to 115 Warm Spaces, plus support to Leeds Community Anchor Network to co-ordinate services and to provide a micro grant scheme. ● The second grant round (£45,000) launched 30/01/23 and extends funding to organisation that joined the map between December and end of January. This round focuses on addressing underserved places (based on GIS modelling), serving Communities of Interest, and improving accessibility of existing Warm Spaces. In cooperation with Forum Central, a network of ‘Enhanced’ Warm Spaces will also be established for people with poor respiratory health or health/COVID-19 concerns or anxiety. A contingency to increase coverage where needed is also included. ● Based on partial sampling - 4000 unique visits in January 2023 alone have been recorded, with an average of 9 visitors per session.
4.5	Winter coats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Led by Zero Waste Leeds and funded by LCC. Over 3500 coats collected and distributed across community locations in the city including through LCC hubs and libraries in November 2022 ● Due to the success of the campaign, the scheme has been extended, utilising a self-supporting model (sites both collect and redistribute coats). The scheme is expected to continue throughout the winter period (estimated close in March 2023).

APPENDIX 2

4.6	Winter Wellbeing packs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Health are working with West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue to pilot a project provide 300 winter wellbeing packs. • This will be part of the fire safety checks undertaken when visiting vulnerable people in their homes and will be alongside a referral to the Green Doctor service, Care and Repair or other relevant support. • As well as practical items, like blankets, thermos mugs, gloves, socks etc there will also be information leaflets on where to get further advice and support (Leeds MIC), Neighbourhood networks, Linking Leeds information.
4.7	Housing Leeds – Housing Officer Income (HOI) Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Leeds Housing Officer Income (HOI) provide tenants with a range of financial support, including benefits and grant applications, as well as dealing with any rent arrears and referrals to other advice and support such as debt advice. From October to December 2022, 1117 tenant households were supported – an increase of 9.83% (1017 tenants supported for October to December 2021).
5	Funding	
5.1	Household Support Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government funding of £7.1m to support vulnerable people with the costs of energy, food and essential items between October and the end of March 2023. Funding is being used as follows; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Support to Housing Benefit recipients not eligible for the £650 DWP Cost of Living payment ○ £70 payments to working age people in receipt of Council Tax Support- Letters sent out w/c 5TH December. ○ Additional funding to the Local Welfare Support Scheme and additional payments for people claiming Discretionary Housing Payments. ○ Funding to Childrens services and Housing Leeds to support residents. ○ Third sector support through Leeds Community Anchor Network (via Voluntary Action Leeds), Forum Central, Leeds Food Aid Network and advice organisations. • In the autumn statement the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that the programme would be extended for 12 months from April 2023. No further details have been received to-date.

APPENDIX 2

5.2	Holiday Activity and Food Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy Holiday’s programme in Leeds provides activities and a healthy hot meal for children in receipt of Free School Meals, over the Easter, Summer and Christmas school holidays. • 158 providers operated over this holiday period. Provision is a mix of third sector, schools based and through Community Hubs ensuring availability is varied and local to children and young people. • Targeted to reach 4,500 children at Christmas but over 5800 children and young people actually took part in Healthy Holiday activities and over 29,000 portions of nutritious, predominantly hot meals were served across the programme. • Details of the programme and all delivery partners can be found at Healthy Holidays (leeds.gov.uk) any queries should be directed to healthyholidays@leeds.gov.uk • Work is now ongoing planning the programme for 2023 with bids assessed for the third sector; schools’ assessment panels currently convened and the development of the Leeds City Council programme underway, including a focus upon targeting under-represented cohorts of children and younger people including older young people and children living in families with experience of domestic abuse.
5.3	West Yorkshire Mayoral Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Yorkshire Mayoral Fund- mainly being used to support the third sector warm spaces and increase in year funding to the Leeds Advice Contract.
5.4	UK Shared Prosperity Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Access has been awarded UKSPF funding, areas relevant to cost of living are as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 22/23: £400k capital funding for Local Welfare support Scheme – additional funding will support those impacted by the cost-of-living crisis, and who require emergency support from the Council. - 23/24: £125k for the provision of additional advice and guidance services. - 24/25: £125k for the provision of additional advice and guidance services.
5.5	British Gas Energy Trust Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • British Gas Energy Trust, through their corporate social responsibility commitments have worked with Housing Leeds to provide tenants with up to £147 of energy vouchers. • The amount awarded to LCC council tenants is £120k in total.
6	Reporting	
6.1	Cost of Living Dashboard	Please see appendix one