

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 month. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Task and finish groups with specific focus on; integrated communication, information, advice and guidance, practical support, funding and reporting. ○ From May 2023 themed meetings on key subject areas have been planned covering; Housing, child poverty, crime, policy and community safety, Marmot City and health, migration/ immigration and support to ethically/ culturally diverse communities, local crisis support, and third sector, advice and support. • Financial Inclusion steering group- to ensure wider partners and services experiences have been considered 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

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Housing ○ Warm spaces (separate page created and mapping added) ○ Help in hubs ○ Health ○ Food ○ Events- Cost of Living filter added to the Leeds Directory to provide details of events/ activities by postcode <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cost of Living and Warm Spaces 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 cost-of-living webpage receiving 31,889 page views and 25,985 unique page views between 1 October and 31 March. ● In the same period, the Warm Spaces webpage received 25,809 views and 21,755 unique views.
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. From 1st October to April, resulted in 342,199 impressions; 6,024 link clicks, 1982 shares/ RTs across all platforms. ● 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)
2.3	Offline Together Leeds Cost of Living campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Radio advertising campaign with Heart Yorkshire (4 weeks) ● Outdoor adverts including free/low-cost billboards and digital screens ● Posters on local community boards, childrens centres and nurseries and all warm spaces venues signposting to libraries and community hubs, or website ● 3,000 leaflets though 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) ● Hospital reception screens

2.4	PR	<p>Positive press response to the launch of Warm Spaces, working with Voluntary Action Leeds to ensure that a positive narrative about Leeds' communities response to the crisis is showcased, through the work of VCSE groups and organisations. We also focused 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 • Good News Stories from Warm Spaces – Doing Good Leeds • 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 <p>During the warmer months we will be telling the stories of venues and activities that started as Warm Spaces, which have continued running due to the wider benefits they've brought to their local community, such as tackling social isolation, teaching new skills, bringing older and younger generations together, to really champion the Leeds community aspect.</p>
2.5	Events	<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 • Financial Wellbeing Week: Held from 12th to 16th June, the week long programme of events aimed to give useful advice on a range of money to people working in Leeds. 13 sessions ran as part of the week with around 300 individuals signed up. Sessions were run by both Council services and partner agencies and covered a range of topics including money and mental health, menopause and your

		<p>money, reducing your energy bills and your carbon footprint and Yorkshire Water support schemes. An evaluation is currently underway to understand the success and reach of the week.</p>
2.6	Cost of living campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
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. The detailed booklet is currently being finalised and will be available in the autumn. • Over 80,000 resources have been distributed to organisations including council services, NHS and health settings, DWP, third sector and universities between October 2022 and June 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. Think link is sent out in the regularly financial inclusion news bulletin.
3.3	Training and awareness raising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Inclusion Team continue to deliver training and awareness sessions to a wide range of council (including elected members) and health services, and city-wide partnerships since October it is estimated that 3500 have been reached. 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

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Communities, Housing & Environment: Leadership forum, Housing Associations, Migration Partnership ○ Resources: Shared services staff ○ Health: Health and Wellbeing Board, Public Health Want to Know More About session, Local Care Partnership, Target conference video, Primary Care Network Fuel poverty and support ○ Elected members: Community Committees Chairs, Inner North East workshop, All members session ○ City partnerships: Leeds Debt Forum, DWP Leeds staff, Leeds Food Aid Network, Leeds Community Anchor Network, Age Friendly Board, Leeds Maternity Strategy Health and Wellbeing group ○ Leeds employees as part of Financial Wellbeing week
3.4	Sharing practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Council officers and partner organisations have had the opportunity to share our learning and practice in our response to the cost-of-living crisis with the following forums and organisations; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Local Government Association Peer Review ○ Borough to Borough visit from Camden and Southwark Chief Executives ○ Local Government Association- Cost of Living (Webinar 2) and upcoming session on Warm Spaces ○ Bank of England Community Forum with the Chair of Court David Roberts, focussed on impact of the Cost of Living crisis on communities and third sector organisations.
4	Practical Support	
4.1	Debt Relief Orders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A Debt Relief Order (DRO) helps low-income residents with unmanageable debts of up to £30,000 and often results in debts being written off completely. However, there is a £90 fee for the client to pay before they can apply for this process. During 2022, it was estimated that 47% of clients eligible for a DRO in Leeds disengaged with the application process and the £90 fee was believed to be a key factor in the disengagement. ● In January 2023, the Financial Inclusion Team commissioned Ebor Gardens Advice Centre to deliver a DRO pilot project, with the aim to reduce the disengagement of clients by providing funding for the £90 fee and support 240 clients onto a DRO over a 12 month period.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results from the first quarter of this project have revealed a positive impact, with clients accessing the funding to get their fee paid, leading to a reduction in housing repossessions and enforcement actions, ending harmful income deductions and relief to clients vulnerable to self-harm/suicide. The disengagement rate for the first quarter was 7.5%. The average amount of debt owed across those being put forward for the DRO was £12,030.
4.2	Heating on Prescription	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Leeds Heating on prescription pilot focuses on supporting people at increased risk of worse health outcomes, who have conditions which are likely to be exacerbated by living in a cold environment. Referral pathways include: Virtual Wards, PCNs, LTHT and Neighbourhood Networks. Funding has increased the capacity of Leeds Green Doctors service. All patients referred into the scheme have access to an enhanced fuel support offer, which depending upon individual circumstances will enable them to heat their homes as much as required throughout the year. Wrap around support is also 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 vouchers, fuel support, white goods, furniture or flooring. The annual budget for Local Welfare Support Scheme (£600 000) has been uplifted via the Household Support Fund for 2023/24 to £2.1m in response to the current levels of need.
4.4	Warm Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During Winter 2022/23, Warm Space locations were established in Leeds including all LCC community hubs and libraries. All offered opportunities for people to gather for free in a warm, safe, and welcoming space. At the project peak, over 200 Warm Spaces were registered on the map, and between October 2022 and May 2023, with over 40,000 visits recorded. Funding from the West Yorkshire Mayoral Fund was distributed via Voluntary Action Leeds to support third sector and faith based Warm Spaces, this included work to address underserved places (based on GIS modelling), serving Communities of Interest, and improving accessibility. In cooperation with Forum Central, a network of 'Enhanced' Warm Spaces was also established for people with health concerns or anxiety. Around 50 organisations operating as Warm Spaces continue to deliver provisions as 'welcoming spaces' in Spring/summer 2024 (grants allocated via the Leeds Community Anchor Network). Funding for Warm Spaces 2023/24 has been agreed via Household Support Fund.

4.5	Winter coat appeal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Led by Zero Waste Leeds and funded by LCC. Overall, between October 2022 – March 2023, 6,269 items of winter clothing were donated and redistributed, with estimated total savings (based on average costs per item) of £132,803.00
4.6	Winter Wellbeing packs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue piloted a project providing 300 winter wellbeing packs as part of the fire safety checks undertaken when visiting vulnerable people in their homes. Referrals were also made 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 was also 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 April 2022 to March 2023, 4630 tenant households were supported.
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 1st October 2023 and 31st March 2023. In Leeds the fund provided the following support; <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. <p>This resulted in;</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A total of 108,072 households supported. Of these 45% were households with children, 5% were pensioner households, 17% had a disabled person within the household, and 32% were households with working age adults without children. ○ 39% was spent on energy, 35% on food, 19% on essential items and 7% on housing ○ 4% of people received vouchers, 68% cash, 20% received support through the third sector organisations, 8% received other/ tangible items. ● In the autumn statement the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that the programme would be extended for 12 months from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024. The scheme for Leeds follows previous rounds, with full details of how the funding will be used available here.
5.2	Holiday Activity and Food Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Healthy Holidays 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. ● 101 providers operated over the Easter 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. ● The Programme reached 5330 children at Easter and over 29,542 portions of nutritious, predominantly hot meals were served across the programme. ● 15% participants identified as having a Special Educational Need or Disability and 87% were in receipt of free school meals ● 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 ● Plans for summer Healthy Holidays are well advanced with all delivery partners established and timetabling in development. Aims include making improvements to administration systems to increase accessibility and specifically targeting under-represented groups to try to secure additional engagement, including development of further bespoke provision aimed at secondary age young people to increase levels of participation. ● We are aiming to reach 10,000 children and young people over summer and anticipate around 112 clubs taking place over this delivery period.

5.3	West Yorkshire Mayoral Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Yorkshire Mayoral Fund (£323,950 November 2022-April 2023) - Funding was primarily used to support the citywide network of faith based and third sector warm spaces, focused on helping those most at risk during the cold weather • The funding also provided a necessary uplift to organisations delivering the Leeds advice contract to help mitigate the impact of the cost of living and inflation on service delivery. • It is anticipated funding from May 2023 to May 2024 will be provided as a one off from the WYCA Mayoral Fund to maintain and enhance the Leeds Advice Contract, both in terms of meeting current inflationary pressures and supporting specialist housing, debt and benefits and immigration advisors to provide specialist and casework advice. In addition, the funding is also expected to support Warm Spaces in winter 2023/24.
5.4	UK Shared Prosperity Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LCC Customer Access has been allocated around £800k in UKSPF funding to cover three financial years on projects relevant to the cost of living: • During 2022/23: £400k of the funding was allocated to the Local Welfare Support Scheme and assisted 6,682 households impacted by the cost of living crisis with white goods or energy support. • In 2023/24: £125k has been awarded to Money Buddies for delivery of outreach sessions across Leeds, supporting local residents with issues relating to the cost of living, particularly around emergency debts, money management and fuel bills. • For 2024/25, a further £125k will be made available for the provision of additional advice and guidance services and £150k to support food infrastructure projects.
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 £140k in total. • Between December 2022 to March 2023 we were able to award 2909 energy vouchers which benefitted 970 families across the City
5.6	Home Upgrade Grant Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leeds City Council has been granted funding to improve approximately 750 mainly private sector households without gas central heating, with energy efficiency measures and renewable heating. This scheme is due to take place throughout late 2023 and 2024.
6	Reporting	
6.1	Cost of Living Dashboard	Please see appendix one