

## 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 the immediate crisis and use collaborative approaches to build resilience for medium and long terms.

	Action Area	Progress update
<b>1</b>	<b>Governance and oversight</b>	
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"> <li>• Strategic Cost of Living meeting- Directors and senior leaders meeting every quarter</li> <li>• Cost of Living and Welfare Board- Senior Officers and partners meeting every month. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Task and finish groups with specific focus on; integrated communication, information, advice and guidance, practical support, funding and reporting.</li> <li>○ From May 2023 themed meetings on key subject areas have been planned covering: Housing, child poverty, crime, policy and community safety, health, local crisis support, and third sector, advice and support.</li> <li>○ Additional meetings have now been planned from October 2023 to facilitate additional updates and planning for the winter months.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Financial Inclusion steering group- to ensure wider partners and services experiences have been considered and key messages disseminated.</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	<b>Communications and engagement</b>	
2.1	Webpages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Together Leeds Cost of Living webpage <a href="http://www.leeds.gov.uk/costofliving">www.leeds.gov.uk/costofliving</a> - updated to link to advice relevant for winter including Welcome Spaces, energy efficiency and health advice.</li> <li>• Warm Spaces webpage re-published with new Welcome Spaces branding and updated assets.</li> </ul>

	Digital Promotions, PR and campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion of free and low-cost activities for families during October and Christmas school holidays including Healthy Holidays</li> <li>• Promotion of Zero Waste Leeds Winter Coats Appeal</li> <li>• Further planned PR focuses will also include Fuel and energy, 16 days of action (including content about relationships, domestic abuse etc) illegal money lending/loan sharks and winter health.</li> </ul>
2.5	Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Community events</b> 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</li> <li>• <b>Financial Wellbeing Week:</b> Held from 12<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> June, the weeklong 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 money, reducing your energy bills and your carbon footprint and Yorkshire Water support schemes. Partnership work continues and plans are underway to prepare for another week of events early next year, alongside other partnership initiatives.</li> </ul>
2.6	Cost of living campaign Housing Leeds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communications campaign/ social media promoting partner agencies events and general financial advice/ money saving ideas.</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	<b>Information, Advice and Guidance</b>	
3.1	Leeds Money Information Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leeds Money Information Centre resources provide up to date information on where to access free, independent, and confidential advice and support in Leeds.</li> <li>• Online integrated mapping tool includes all advice points, food aid map, digital services, and Leeds School Uniform Exchange.</li> <li>• Printed resources available including flyers (including translations), concertinas, posters and business cards. In addition, the comprehensive Managing Your Money printed booklet has been updated and redesigned, with 20,000 copies on order to be distributed to Community Hubs and Libraries, Housing Teams and external financial inclusion partners from October 2023.</li> <li>• In addition to this, a further 40,000 printed resources have been distributed to organisations including council services, NHS and health settings, DWP, third sector and universities since January 2023.</li> </ul>

3.2	Google drive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The cost-of-living crisis google drive was created to ensure there is awareness amongst frontline services of resources and support available in the city as well as key messages around the cost-of-living.</li> <li>• 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. The link is sent out in the regular financial inclusion news bulletin and is also cascaded through training/briefing sessions delivered by the financial inclusion team.</li> </ul>
3.3	Training and awareness raising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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 22 it is estimated that 6000 individuals have been reached. This has included; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Adult Social Care- Better Lives Board, Better Together, Forum for Race Equality in Social care and Health</li> <li>○ Childrens Services: Social care staff, Early Help &amp; Directors Development session</li> <li>○ Communities, Housing &amp; Environment: Leadership forum, Housing Associations, Migration Partnership, Housing Leeds, Gas and Electric operatives</li> <li>○ Elected members: Community Committees Chairs, Inner North East workshop, All members session</li> <li>○ Health: Health and Wellbeing Board, Public Health Want to Know More About sessions, Public Health Conference, Local Care Partnership, Target conference video, Primary Care Network Fuel poverty and support</li> <li>○ Housing: Gas and electric operatives</li> <li>○ 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, Armed Forces Covenant, LGBT+ hub</li> <li>○ Leeds employees as part of Financial Wellbeing week, and Royal Mail staff</li> <li>○ Resources: Shared services staff</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

3.4	Sharing practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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"> <li>○ Local Government Association Peer Review</li> <li>○ Borough to Borough visit from Camden and Southwark Chief Executives</li> <li>○ Local Government Association- Cost of Living (Webinar 2) and upcoming session on Warm Spaces</li> <li>○ 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.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>4 Practical Support</b>		
4.1	Debt Relief Orders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• The Financial Inclusion Team allocated £25,000 to Ebor Gardens Advice Centre to deliver the DRO pilot project, with the aim to reduce the disengagement of clients by providing the £90 fee.</li> <li>• Results from the third 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. As of Q3, 88 clients have had their DROs funded and over £1m in debts have been written off. The year to date disengagement rate by the third quarter was 5%. The average amount of debt owed across those being put forward for the DRO was £12,126.</li> </ul>
4.2	Home Plus Leeds (Affordable Warmth)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home Plus Leeds service provides energy efficiency and fuel bill advice to lower income vulnerable residents across Leeds, as well as referrals to grants for heating and energy efficiency improvements.</li> <li>• The scheme is targeted at supporting 900 households experiencing fuel poverty.</li> </ul>
4.4	Welcome Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In Winter 2022/23 over 200 organisations including all Leeds City Council Community Hubs and Libraries, faith-based, private and third sector stepped forward to become part of the Leeds Warm Space Project. At the project peak, over 200 Warm Spaces were registered on the Leeds Warm Spaces map, and over 65% of the Leeds population was within a 10-minute walk of a Warm Space.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The project has been re-established in winter 2023/24, drawing on learning from last winter and has been developed by LCC, Voluntary Action Leeds and the Leeds Community Anchor Network. Based on consultation with 2022 delivery organisations about their preferred name, the title of the project for 2023/24 has been changed to 'Welcome Spaces'.</li> <li>• We expect the majority of Welcome Spaces will be delivered by third sector and faith-based organisations, as well as Leeds City Council Community Hubs and Libraries.</li> <li>• Printed, digital and social media branded assets are included in the Cost of Living Google Drive.</li> <li>• Funding for the project has been secured via West Yorkshire Mayoral Fund and Household Support Fund. Voluntary Action Leeds have collated expressions of interest from third sector and faith-based organisations interested in hosting a Welcome Space, which was shared with the Leeds Community Anchor Network (LCAN) who (supported by VAL) are leading in both coordinating activity and distributing funding to support Welcome Spaces within their locality.</li> <li>• Further information on this year's approach can be found here: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <a href="#">Welcome Spaces - Guidelines for Winter 2023 organisations - Doing Good Leeds.</a></li> <li>○ <a href="#">Welcome Spaces (leeds.gov.uk)</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
4.5	Winter Coat Appeal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alongside Welcome Spaces, the Leeds Winter Coat Appeal, coordinated by Zero Waste Leeds aims to collect and redistribute winter coats. This year the appeal will run from Monday 16th October to the end February 2024.</li> <li>• Requested items: Coats for adults, children, and babies, Waterproofs, Fleece, Baby cot sleeping bags, Snow suits for babies and young children, Pram footmuffs, Hats, scarves, and gloves</li> <li>• Community Hubs, Libraries, Welcome Spaces, and community groups will be operating as distribution and collection points.</li> <li>• In 2022, 6269 items of winter clothing were donated and redistributed, with estimated total savings of £132,803.</li> </ul>
4.6	Housing Leeds – Housing Officer Income (HOI) Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• During August and September 2023, the HOI team have worked with 841 Households in total and secured £ £233,186.74 in additional income. with an average additional income per family of £277.</li> </ul>

		This included 216 households with Children (£69,720 of additional income, with an average of £323 per family)
4.7	Leeds School Uniform Exchange	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LCC fund Zero Waste Leeds (ZWL) to bring a co-ordinated uniform reuse scheme to the city.</li> <li>• To date 223 schools covered by a uniform exchange (74 school led, 43 parents led, 23 school lost property schemes, 50 schools covered by Community exchanges and 33 Facebook exchanges).</li> <li>• Over the summer via events and pop-up shops 16,714 items were given out to 2,787 families.</li> <li>• <b>£284,138</b> was saved by families not having to buy new uniform. This figure is based on the Department of Education's "Cost of School Uniform" report.</li> <li>• <b>60,170kg</b> CO2 emissions were saved by reusing uniform rather than having to produce new.</li> </ul>
<b>5</b>	<b>Funding</b>	
5.1	Household Support Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government funding of £14.2m to support vulnerable people with the costs of energy, food and essential items between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 and 31st March 2024. In Leeds the fund provided the following support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Direct support via council services- Welfare &amp; Benefits, Housing &amp; Childrens</li> <li>○ Applications via the Local Welfare Support Scheme</li> <li>○ Third sector support working citywide through a partnership approach involving Leeds Community Anchor Network (via Voluntary Action Leeds), Forum Central, Leeds Food Aid Network and advice organisations, with funding for Zarach and Leeds Baby Bank, and Hamara and Give a Gift for their work to coordinate the city's cultural food hub offer.</li> <li>○ Winter support in collaboration with Public Health</li> </ul> </li> <li>• For HSF 3 which was a 6 month funding pot between October 2022 and March 2023, 108,072 households in Leeds were provided support. Of these 45% were households with children, 32% were working age households with no children, 17% had a disabled person in the household, and 5% were pensioner households.</li> <li>• 39% of the funding was spent on energy, 35% on food, 19% on essential items, and 7% housing.</li> </ul>

5.2	Holiday Activity and Food Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funded by £3.5m from the Department for Education’s Holiday Activity Fund, the 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.</li> <li>• Provision is a mix of third sector, schools based and through Community Hubs ensuring availability is varied and local to children and young people.</li> <li>• In 2022, 24,537 children and young people participated in the scheme, with 170,499 portions of food provided.</li> <li>• 107 providers have been funded in 2023, including schools, community hubs/ libraries and third sector organisations.</li> <li>• Over easter and summer 2023 17,198 children and young people have taken part in activities, 106,042 portions of food provided.</li> <li>• Over 100 organisations will be running Healthy Holidays programmes for children and young people over the Christmas holidays.</li> </ul>
5.3	West Yorkshire Mayoral Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Funding from May 2023 to May 2024 will be provided as a one off from the WYCA Mayoral Fund to; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 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.</li> <li>○ Support for charities, and third sector organisations (including faith-based organisations with the delivery of Welcome Spaces in winter 2023/24 (in conjunction with funding allocated from Household Support Fund).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
5.4	UK Shared Prosperity Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LCC Financial Inclusion team has been allocated around £800k in UKSPF funding to cover three financial years on projects relevant to the cost of living:</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2023/24: £125k has been awarded to Money Buddies for delivery of outreach sessions across Leeds, supporting households with issues relating to the cost of living, particularly around emergency debts, money management and fuel bills.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
5.5	British Gas Energy Trust Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• British Gas Energy Trust, through their corporate social responsibility commitments have worked with Housing Leeds to provide tenants with £200k of energy vouchers for allocation between November and December 2023.</li> <li>• Eligible tenants can receive up to £147 worth of energy vouchers.</li> </ul>
5.6	Home Upgrade Grant Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
<b>6</b>	<b>Reporting &amp; Evidence</b>	
6.1	Cost of Living Dashboard	Please see appendix 2B
6.2	Hosting and attending city boards, forums and networks	<p>In addition to the cost-of-living meetings referenced in the Governance and Oversight section, the Financial Inclusion Team routinely host and attend a wide range of city boards, forums and networks. This is to build understanding of the work undertaken and to ensure the approach adopted is collaborative and strongly influenced by communities across Leeds.</p> <p><b>Financial Inclusion Team led-</b> Financial Inclusion Steering Group (established 2005), Food Insecurity Taskforce, Food Strategy Group, Leeds Gambling Harms Group, Healthy Holidays Steering Group.</p> <p><b>LCC led boards &amp; groups</b> - Age Friendly Leeds, Thriving Board, Better Lives Leeds, Leeds City Council Internal Food Group, Men's Health Network, Marmot City Programme, Financial Wellbeing Anchor Network</p> <p><b>Forums and networks-</b> Leeds Debt Advice Network &amp; Leeds Debt Forum, Leeds Food Aid Network, West Yorkshire Poverty Network, Welfare Rights Group, Job Centre Liaison meeting, Leeds Poverty Truth Commission, Regional Gambling Harms Community of Interest Group</p>