

## APPENDIX 2 - 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..</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>• Warm Spaces campaign page for last year rebranded to welcome spaces and reinstated, linking to Leeds Directory and providing information about the scheme.</li> <li>• All marketing assets rebranded from warm spaces to welcome spaces</li> <li>• Key messaging themes: Winter Coat Appeal, Together Leeds Campaign website, Low/no cost family activities for Christmas, Healthy Holidays, Fuel and Energy, 16 days of action (including content about relationships, domestic abuse etc), winter health, Loan Sharks, MIC resources. Messages shared across corporate channels including Housing Leeds.</li> <li>• Sharing messaging for the Government campaign ‘Stop Fraud’ and also sharing the Step Change campaign for ‘debt awareness week’</li> <li>• Full communications evaluation report will be available towards the end of March</li> </ul>

	Digital Promotions, PR and campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Once again the Zero Waste Leeds winter coat appeal secured positive media coverage.</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 in February, the weeklong programme of events aimed to give useful advice on a range of money to people working in Leeds and was promoted internally. Sessions were run by both Council services and partner agencies and covered a range of topics.</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 website details of <b>free, independent, and confidential</b> advice and support in Leeds.</li> <li>All information reflects the current situation and is updated regularly.</li> <li>Integrated mapping- includes all advice points, food aid map, digital services, and Leeds School Uniform Exchange.</li> <li>Physical 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 distributed to Community Hubs and Libraries, Housing Teams and a range of external financial inclusion partners from October 2023.</li> <li>In addition to this, over 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>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.</li> <li>Themed folders on Communications, Money, Housing, Health, Food and Energy in addition to details of how to order physical resources. The link is sent out in the regular financial inclusion news bulletin.</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. 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>○ Resources: Shared services staff</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>○ Elected members: Community Committees Chairs, Inner North East workshop, All members session &amp; bespoke training/briefing sessions</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</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. During 2022, it was estimated that 47% of clients eligible for a DRO in Leeds disengaged with the application process, strongly linked to the £90 fee.</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</li> </ul>

		<p>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.</p>
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 2023/24 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 Welcome Space Project.</li> <li>• The project draws on learning from winter 2022/23 and has been developed by LCC, Voluntary Action Leeds and the Leeds Community Anchor Network Based on consultation with organisations.</li> <li>• Funding for the project has been secured via West Yorkshire Mayoral Fund and Household Support Fund. Voluntary Action Leeds collated expression of interest from third sector and faith-based organisations which was then shared with the Leeds Community Anchor Network (LCAN) who coordinated activity and distributed funding to support Welcome Spaces within their locality.</li> <li>• Further information on this year’s approach can be found here: <a href="#">Welcome Spaces - Guidelines for Winter 2023 organisations - Doing Good Leeds</a></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, running from Monday 16th October to the end February 2024.</li> <li>• Requested items: Coats for adults, children, and babies, Waterproofs, Fleeeces, Baby cot sleeping bags, Snow suits for babies and young children, Pram footmuffs, Hats, scarves, and gloves</li> <li>• Selected Community Hubs, Libraries, Welcome Spaces, and community groups operating as distribution and collection points.</li> <li>• Full evaluation report to follow in the coming months.</li> </ul>
4.6	Housing Leeds	<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>• Between April 23 and Feb 2024 inclusive, the HOI team have worked with 4199 Households in total and secured £ £2,853,040 in additional income. With an average additional income per family of £679.</li> </ul>

		<p>This included 1109 households with Children (£594,505 of additional income, with an average of £536 per family).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As part of the Leeds allocation of Housing Support Fund, £350,000 was made available to Housing Leeds to offer support to tenants with ongoing arrears issues.</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>• Continuation of Household Support Fund for 6 months was confirmed in the Governments Spring Budget (6th March). Further details will be provided once DWP guidance has been received.</li> </ul>
5.2	Holiday Activity and Food Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funded 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>• Over 2023, 22,000 children and young people attended healthy holidays programmes- and 270,000 portions of food were provided. 650 children also took part in swimming lessons.</li> <li>• For the 2024 programme, Leeds was allocated £3.4m (reduction since 2023). Leeds City Council and Leeds Community Foundation have funded 39 school providers, 44 third sector organisations, and 8 council provisions.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently no indication from national government regarding funding for beyond 2024 which is a cause for concern and would be a significant loss if not continued.</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 was 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> <li>• There is currently no update as to whether further funding will be made available beyond May 2024.</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> <li>• From 2023/24 to 2024/25: £250k has been awarded to Money Buddies over two years 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>• In 2024/25, £150k is to be allocated to Leeds Food Aid Network 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 £400k of energy vouchers for allocation between November 2023 and March 2024.</li> <li>• Eligible tenants can receive up to £147 worth of energy vouchers with 7597 vouchers issued to 2532 households to date.</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 has now commenced and has had 190 applications so far. The scheme is due to run throughout 2024.</li> </ul>
<b>6</b>	<b>Reporting</b>	
6.1	Cost of Living Dashboard	<p>Please see <a href="https://observatory.leeds.gov.uk/home/cost-of-living/">https://observatory.leeds.gov.uk/home/cost-of-living/</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Previous paper based quarterly report has now been replaced by a new live interactive version hosted on the Cost of Living page of Leeds Directory.</li> <li>The front page covers headline statistics which have been RAG rated where appropriate. The information button on the right also provides an explanation of each rating and links to all of the data sources and refresh dates for the datasets utilised.</li> </ul>