

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
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 regularly • Financial Inclusion steering group- to ensure wider partners and services experiences have been considered and key messages disseminated.
2	Communications and engagement	
2.1	Webpages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Cost of Living webpage is still live and relevant for 2024/25 Together Leeds. • Key messaging themes for 24/25: Welcome Spaces, Community hubs and support they offer, 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, Pension Credit. Messages shared across corporate channels including Housing Leeds. • Full communications evaluation report will be available towards the end of March 2025
	Digital Promotions, PR and campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once again the Zero Waste Leeds uniform exchange secured positive media coverage over the summer. • General messages over the summer signposting to the Cost of living webpage • Promoted low cost and no cost activities available for families during school holidays

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued to promote the healthy holidays scheme Shared Mindwell resources around mental health linked to money worries. Supported the Step Change campaign for debt awareness week Shared the Gov UK campaign for Stop Fraud Shared the NHS Healthy Start scheme Stop Loan Sharks campaign Shared the Gov UK Help for households campaign for 'Childcare Choices' Supported Pension Credit week of action and pension awareness week.
2.5	Events	<p>FOCUS: DWP Pension Credit Week of Action: 2nd –8th September 2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Channels used to share assets and messaging from the DWP PC Stakeholder Toolkit including Corporate Communications, Housing Leeds and Community Hubs and Libraries. Targeted information shared with LCC staff -Housing Leeds, Community Hubs and Libraries Community Hubs and Library sites hosting digital and printed Pension Credit posters and printed flyer materials Financial Inclusion Team – DWP PC Stakeholder Toolkit shared with partners via Financial Inclusion channels and focused September Financial Inclusion Steering Group Meeting on PC. Age Friendly Leeds Board Members & Partnership Members promoted/shared the comms linking to the DWP toolkit Leeds Older People's Forum supported promotions & prepared a comms pack which included a newsletter article; social media posts and links to the DWP Toolkit.
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. MIC Website is currently being migrated to 'Drupal' which will enhance the look and navigation. Physical resources include flyers (and translations), concertinas, posters, business cards and the Managing Your Money printed booklet. A new benefits advice flyer is also available from October 2024

3.2	Google drive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure awareness amongst frontline services of support available in the city and key messages around the cost-of-living crisis, a google drive which across organisations has been created. 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.
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. In 2024, this has included: Adult Social Care, Children’s Services, Headteacher Forums, Elected Members, Leeds Community Anchor Network, Communities, Housing & Environment: Leadership forum, Leeds Migration Partnership, Age Friendly Board & Partnership etc
4	Practical Support	
4.1	Home Plus Leeds (Affordable Warmth)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. The scheme is targeted at supporting 1000 households experiencing fuel poverty per year as well as providing warmth and energy efficiency interventions to 850 households.
4.2	Welcome Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. Funding for the project was 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 Welcome Spaces within their locality, hosted on Leeds Directory. Welcome Spaces delivery in Community Hubs and Libraries will commence from 21st October with options for third sector delivery currently being finalised. Funding for this years project has now been confirmed via Household Support Fund.
4.3	Winter Coat Appeal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Leeds Winter Coat Appeal, coordinated by Zero Waste Leeds will once again collect and redistribute winter coats from October to March 2024/25. Requested items: Coats for adults, children, and babies, Waterproofs, Fleeces, Baby cot sleeping bags, Snow suits for babies and young children, Pram footmuffs, Hats, scarves, and gloves

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From 21st October, approximately 49 collection points across the city will operate in addition to a further 24 distribution only points. Sites include businesses, leisure centres, third sector organisations, Community Hubs and Libraries.
4.4	Housing Leeds	<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. Between April 24 and June 2024 inclusive, the HOI team have worked with 1344 Households in total and secured £1,589,264 in additional income. With an average additional income per family of £1182. This included 301 households with Children (£271,884 of additional income, with an average of £903 per family). As part of the Leeds allocation of Housing Support Fund 5, £225,000 was made available to Housing Leeds to offer support to tenants with ongoing arrears issues.
5	Funding	
5.1	Household Support Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HSF5 - Government funding of £7.1m to directly support vulnerable people with the costs of energy, food and essential items over the 6 month period 1st April to 30th September 2024. In Leeds, the fund provided support including through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct support via council services- Welfare & Benefits, Housing Leeds, Housing Options & Children’s Services; Applications via the Local Welfare Support Scheme; 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. Examples include funding for Zarach and Leeds Baby Bank, as well as Hamara and Give a Gift for their work coordinating the city’s cultural food hub offer. Winter support in collaboration with Public Health A further 6-month extension to Household Support Fund was announced on 2nd September 2024 (to 31st March 2025). The updated DWP guidance was received with no substantive changes, and the

		Delivery Plan (in line with previous rounds) has now been approved.
5.2	Holiday Activities and Food Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funded from the Department for Education’s Holiday Activities and Food Programme, the Healthy Holidays scheme in Leeds provides activities and a healthy, hot meal for children eligible for income-related Free School Meals, over the Easter, Summer and Christmas school holidays. • For the 2024 programme, Leeds was allocated £3.4m. Leeds City Council and Leeds Community Foundation funded 39 school providers, 44 third sector organisations, 4 Breeze programmes and 4 Community Hub and Libraries programmes. • A booking and eligibility checking system has been implemented for the 2024 programme to meet new programme requirements. All parents of school aged children who are eligible for income-related Free School Meals can register and access activities across the city- Healthy Holidays Leeds. • Currently no indication from national government regarding funding for beyond 2024 which would be a significant loss if not continued.
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. • There is currently no update regarding further funding.
5.4	UK Shared Prosperity Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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: • 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. • 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. • In 2024/25, £210k was allocated to Leeds Food Aid Network to support food infrastructure projects. <p>2024/25 Q1 update:</p>

		<p><u>Money Buddies Outreach</u> project was funded £125k for this financial year. It has supported 459 households between April to August with cost of living and money related issues and are ahead of their target of 408. In this time the project has brought £1.4m in financial gains to clients, averaging at £3,000 per household.</p> <p><u>Food Infrastructure Project</u> received £210k of funds to support food aid projects across the city. Following an application process, Leeds FAN are in the process of allocating this fund in grants between £5k to £20k to providers looking to improve access and support from their facilities on capital items such as white goods, cooking equipment, kitchen refurbs to electric vans.</p>
5.5	British Gas Energy Trust Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • British Gas Energy Trust, through their corporate social responsibility commitments worked with Housing Leeds to provide tenants with £300k of energy vouchers for winter 2024. • Eligible tenants (prepayment meter with no debt) may receive up to 3x £49 energy vouchers.
5.6	Home Upgrade Grant Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leeds City Council has been granted funding to improve approximately 330 mainly private sector households without gas central heating, with energy efficiency measures and renewable heating. This scheme has now commenced and has had 213 households signed up so far with 103 completed installations. The scheme is due to run throughout 2024.
6	Reporting	
6.1	Cost of Living Dashboard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Leeds Cost of Living Dashboard brings together the latest available national and local data to help provide an overview of how rising prices, particularly food, energy and fuel prices are having an impact in Leeds: https://observatory.leeds.gov.uk/home/cost-of-living/ • 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. • A monthly bulletin highlighting and summarising the key trends is released on the same day as inflation each month (you can access these by clicking the PDF links listed by month underneath the dashboard).

6.2	Leeds Poverty Factbook	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Leeds Poverty Fact Book contains national and locally sourced data and information to help understand the impacts of low-income poverty in Leeds. This resource provides an overview of the different terms, how they are calculated and includes analysis on what the data means for Leeds.• Previously the factbook was presented in text and tables on the Leeds Observatory. The data has now been moved into an interactive dashboard, which can be accessed via this link: Leeds Observatory – Leeds Poverty Fact Book
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