

APPENDIX 3



STATE OF THE CITY 2022:

TeamLeeds – Responding to the Cost of Living Crisis

Reporting on the event held on 7th December 2022

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CONTENTS

1) Introduction to this Report.....	3
2) Welcome: Cllr James Lewis, Leader, Leeds City Council.....	4
3) Keynote Speaker: Dame Julia Unwin, former Chief Executive of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation ...	5
4) First Table Discussion: Impacts and City Response	7
5) Panel Session	11
6) Keynote Speaker: Tracy Brabin, Mayor of West Yorkshire	15
7) Second Table Discussion: Opportunities for Further Action Together.....	16
8) Actions and Close	22
Annex 1: Implications and Action Opportunities for the City and Stakeholders	233
Annex 2: Implications and Action Opportunities for Anchor Organisations	236

1) Introduction to this Report

Leeds' annual State of the City 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:

- 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 focus of this year's event was on the considerable impacts of the rising cost of living on people and organisations in Leeds. It 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 to:

- Minimise the impacts of rising living costs on the poorest residents
- Support businesses and organisations through economic shocks, particularly those that are most vulnerable, many of which will be in our third sector
- Build greater security for the city's future

To stimulate this discussion, the event brought together voices from a range of sectors and those on the frontline of the crisis, with a strong focus on action and participation through facilitated table discussions. An additional objective was also to continue momentum built around the city's longstanding mission to tackle poverty and inequality while improving quality of life for everyone in Leeds via the [Best City Ambition](#), and to continue to draw support and contributions from colleagues, partners and communities across all parts of the city.

This report has been produced with support from Northern Gas Networks working as part of the Leeds Inclusive Anchors Network. It provides an overview of the core inputs and contributions made at the event – both by those invited to address the audience as part of the agenda and by the audience itself as part of facilitated table discussions and via the online Slido tool. The sections that follow mirror the agenda on the day. Additionally, an annex sums up reflections and potential opportunities for the Leeds Anchor Network in terms of actions that could be taken by network members in response.

2) Welcome: Cllr James Lewis, Leader, Leeds City Council

Cllr Lewis welcomed delegates and noted how positive it was to have such a diverse group of people and organisations coming together to discuss the critical issue of the cost of living crisis. Points made in setting the scene were that:

- Following unprecedented partnership working during the pandemic, Leeds has moved from a 'Best Council Plan' to a 'Best City Ambition', which reflects working across partnerships and sectors to face challenges and seize opportunities – a “TeamLeeds” approach. This includes action on inclusive growth, health and wellbeing, and climate change.
- The context of poverty and inequality is profound – for example, 24% of children and young people in Leeds are currently growing up in relative poverty.
- The purpose of the event is to support and reinforce the drive for everyone across the city to be working together to tackle these challenges.

Twitter: Tom Riordan, Chief Executive, Leeds City Council: *V good State of the City event focused on the cost of living crisis with packed Civic Hall and excellent speakers and panels. As ever lots of quality Team Leeds response but so much more to do.*

Cllr Lewis stressed that there are already many positive initiatives to build on, including:

- Work by Leeds Anchor Network¹ organisations focused on directing procurement to boost local supply chains as a route to greater recirculation of money in the city, on providing good jobs and pay, and on ensuring services support those facing disadvantage
- The Food Aid Network established during COVID to help people with isolation and now playing its part in tackling this crisis
- Universities and colleges supporting their students
- Communities coming together to drive local action such as Food Pantries and Warm Spaces

These examples show what can be achieved through the TeamLeeds approach, with Cllr Lewis urging the group to focus during the event on what more can be done.

¹ The Leeds Anchor Network brings together 13 of the city's major public bodies and utility businesses; alongside the Leeds Community Anchor Network established to bring community level anchor organisations together



Source: Cllr Annie Maloney, Twitter

3) Keynote Speaker: Dame Julia Unwin, former Chief Executive of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Dame Julia Unwin opened by thanking Leeds and the City Council for making the cost of living crisis a focus for this year's event and described that her address would consider the origins of the crisis before detailing what this means for people and why it is so important for places like Leeds to act.

In respect to the origins of the crisis, she described us as being *"in the eye of the perfect storm"* in which three critical determinants were at play:

- a) **Covid-19** – that changed the lives of people globally; was hugely divisive in respect to age, race and socio-economic experience; and that had left a legacy of fear, anxiety and anger
- b) **Climate change** – being real and evident and having an enormous impact now and in ways that will change the global world order for the long term
- c) **Conflict** – that being war in mainland Europe having a significant impact across the global economy; conflict in our own society with racial discrimination at the fore; and conflict in institutions in the form of industrial action

Dame Julia positioned the cost of living crisis as the next in a rolling wave of crises, albeit one that the poorest in society have been living with for some time, using as an example of this the stark number of children living in poverty. This poverty is becoming further entrenched through the current crisis thanks to the 'poverty premium' i.e. that households in poverty spend a much greater proportion of their limited incomes on basic needs such as food, housing and energy, with the rising costs we are seeing making it even more *"expensive to be poor."* She made apparent the anger, frustration and anxiety that this roots in to households who have do not have any room in their finances to simply *"tighten their belts"* and the space that this presented for 'bad actors' to create toxic and hateful narratives if places deny these emotions across their populations.

With this in mind, Dame Julia stressed that how you respond as a city to this crisis, in the context of such lingering and heightened emotions in communities, is critical; and that a city such as Leeds must use all of the levers at its disposal to make the right decisions that will make a real difference to help people here to cope. She stressed:

- Failing to consider procurement – such as the employment practices of large contractors (e.g. large scale cleaning contracts) – is in effect hardwiring poverty
- Pursuing any growth over good growth is hardwiring economic volatility
- Making capital decisions that result in the quickest payback is hardwiring places into being left behind
- Treating the third sector as irrelevant is dismissing the community action that is essential to supporting people and places to navigate this crisis

Dame Julia presented the audience with three ways of thinking through this challenge – the *"three Ps"*:

- 1) Focus on the power of place:** *"hyper-local matters"* because places are home to rich and dense civic society networks that can support the poorest as part of inclusive growth but that need decent long term investment if they are to do so, with Leeds being well positioned to do this based on existing successful approaches to collaboration and cross sector working.
- 2) Pay attention to the pockets of the poor:** people in poverty are already paying a premium for their basic needs and that is being further entrenched. Places need to understand why this happens and then be prepared to take risks to respond in ways that can make a difference.
- 3) Support peoples' prospects:** people who already feel divided, angry and anxious are not well placed to think about their next steps. Their prospects are also hugely dependent on the place they live. In a time of crisis, inclusive growth can easily be knocked off track by a desire to return to growth of any form. Maintaining a focus on enabling peoples' prospects to grow in the current climate is essential to ensuring people are not further left behind.

Dame Julia concluded by stressing that the sort of civic leadership and sense of shared responsibility found in Leeds is key but cautioned that this is not self-sustaining and must be nurtured and backed by a strong narrative of what is driving these institutions to act and to what end.

Twitter: Steve Hoey, Chief Executive, Turning Lives Around: *What we need according to Julia Unwin: emergency help, yes, plus, recognise the power of place - hyperlocal was key during covid, circular economy helps. Dismantle poverty and debt. Improve people's prospects. Civic leadership, shared responsibility.*

4) First Table Discussion: Impacts and City Response

This first of two table discussions focused on the impacts being seen as a result of the crisis and immediate action being taken in response by local organisations across the public, third and private sectors. Tables were asked to consider two questions, the key points of which are set out below, including those captured via the Slido online facility, and grouped into themes.

Question 1: What are the main impacts of the cost of living crisis that you are seeing on people, businesses or organisations in Leeds?

Poverty and household finances

- Increasing levels of poverty and numbers of people in dire need
- Greater range of people impacted including those who have not had to seek support before and therefore do not know where to go
- Increasing number of people falling into debt
- People unable to afford utilities including broadband and mobile phone contracts
- Lack of financial literacy, notably amongst young people who have not previously had to manage their finances and are now having to navigate issues such as shifting prices, confusing fine prints in housing contracts and national interventions/policies and understand how these things will impact them and their finances

Food

- Increasing demand for, and dependence on, food banks/pantries across communities
- Increase in number of people requesting food that does not requiring cooking as they cannot afford to cook or do not have the equipment
- Far greater range of people using food banks, with increasing use by working people
- Increased levels of hunger in children
- Mental health impacts and sense of panic over where food and meals will come from

Housing, fuel and warmth

- Increases in people not using heating due to inability to cover increasing costs and further compounded for people with more costly prepayment meters fitted

- More cold, damp homes as a result of reduced heating with impacts on health and wellbeing, especially for people who require consistent warmth to manage health conditions
- Mental health impacts and uncertainty over fuel costs and how to stay warm
- Fewer people with funds available to make home improvements to help keep them warm
- More people accessing warm spaces
- Increased housing issues notably in respect to private landlord evictions and increasing rents
- Increased need for emergency housing yet lack of appropriate supply, especially for younger women who do not feel existing provision is safe for them
- Increases in homelessness
- Increased demand for affordable homes with demand far outstripping supply

Health

- Increasing numbers of people suffering with deteriorations in mental health and suicidal ideation triggered by stress, anxiety, fear and worry including over ability to afford bills
- Deterioration in mental resilience and sense that people are consumed by many challenges
- More people coming to advise partners and with more complex issues, including diminished ability to cope with previous traumas
- Increases in safeguarding issues as a result of mental health
- Increasing prevalence of mental health amongst a wider range of people, with notable impacts on young people
- Deepening health inequalities and disproportionate impacts on people with existing conditions including worsening conditions as a result of being unable to heat home
- Increased prevalence of ill-health due to the effects of damp
- Increasing numbers of people unable to pay for paid services such as dentist and opticians

Societal

- Increased domestic violence, violence against children and tensions between people leading to violence
- Increase in shoplifting
- Sense that we are not all in it together, especially given disproportionate impact of the crisis on poor areas, minority communities and disabled people
- Normalisation of poverty and destitution
- New cohorts forced to ask for help who never thought that they would need a safety net
- Potential increases in exploitation and safeguarding issues
- Increased loan shark use
- Impact on young people e.g. those leaving care needing greater support and rising levels of student anxiety and demand for hardship funding
- Limited access to the over-stretched services required to support people in communities

Organisational – cross sector

- Increased staff anxiety, stress, burnout and sickness and a sense of staff being consumed by many challenges
- Staff struggling with increased costs and in supporting themselves e.g. anecdotally nurses coming to work without breakfast and impacting on wellbeing whilst in work

- Organisations making cost of living pay increases to staff because it is the 'right thing to do' but with question marks over true affordability and as such impact on long term sustainability

Organisational – public and third sectors

- Increase in demand for already over-stretched services across public and voluntary provision in areas such as advice on finance, food, housing etc and leading to overwhelmed staff
- Demand pressures compounded by increased operational costs and reduced funding
- Sense of organisations being consumed by many challenges
- Councillors receiving a significantly increased casework, much of which is associated with fuel cost anxiety (especially regarding prepayment meters and by households needing consistent heating associated with health conditions); and by business owners concerned for the future of their business, especially due to heating bills
- Staffing tensions leading to strikes and staff shortages

Organisational – specifically third sector

- Eroding service provision including due to loss of volunteers who are needing to take up paid work and diminished funding and donations
- Despair amongst third sector as more people come forward for support requiring waiting lists where this has never been needed before e.g. for drug/alcohol support
- For permanent staff in third sector – pressures on recruitment and retention; burnout as staff are unable to disconnect from working with people in desperate situations; admin roles becoming front facing roles due to demand pressures
- Threat to ground level third sector as larger organisations such as NHS look inwards with their funding and not commission out
- View that the third sector is doing the job of statutory services

Organisational – specifically private sector

- Reduced income for businesses as people spend less
- Continued struggle to rebuild finances/repay debt post-Covid
- Business owners concerned for the future of their business in the face of increased cost of running the business and uncertainty
- Potential impact on business closures and hence increased unemployment and poverty

Question 2: If you are representing an organisation, what immediate actions are you taking already in response to the crisis?

Poverty and household finances

- Debt advice and debt relief grants
- Money buddies, including co-location with food banks
- Financial advice
- Giving out loans

- Wellbeing fund
- Additional funds made available for winter grants to get through this winter
- Help for people in applying for grants and benefits

Food

- Leeds Food Strategy
- Food pantries – including joint funding by local government and third sector
- Church Harvest collection
- Ward community food programme
- Out of hours food provision
- Provision of slow cookers

Housing, fuel and warmth

- Warm Spaces - 108 registered from a start point of 40 with Leeds City Council providing website infrastructure and third sector helping to increase capacity
- Fuel vouchers across Citizens Advice, Leeds FAN and Fuel Bank Foundation
- Finance for home insulation with voluntary groups setting up support to help in installation
- Housing Support Fund
- New residents associations established to voice concerns
- Directing Housing Advisory Panels (HAPs) and community committee funding
- Clarion's creation of modular homes for the homeless working with St George's Crypt
- Coat and clothing exchanges

Health

- MIND and DIAL providing support with food banks and green doctors referrals
- Running groups for men to help with mental health (but only with short term funding)
- Local anchor institutions action on health concerns e.g. OFFLOAD initiative on male suicide prevention in West Leeds supported by Leeds Rhinos & Leeds Community Foundation
- Active travel support
- Lots of good healthy holiday provision (but could deliver 10 times as much)

Societal

- Running social wellbeing groups such as woodworking and gardening
- Focus on de-stigmatising asking for help
- Councillors proactive in communities and using hyper-local funding to support and create community schemes and events offering free activities to people to counter isolation
- Support from religious institutions
- Digital engagement and volunteers who support others to get on line
- Measuring social value
- Supporting social enterprise
- Leeds City Council's Winter Friends project highlighting support and resources in Leeds, including recruiting volunteers as Winter Friends and support people in their community
- High street public events and circular economy initiatives (e.g. local lotteries) initiated
- Taking on a pastoral role

- Campaigning and activism

Organisational action

- Support for students across further and higher education, including universities absorbing most rent increases and providing free transport between campuses and £2 meals
- Amending home working agreements to allow staff to come into the office for warmth
- Taskforce to work on cost of living impact of staff and service users
- Make sure staff have easy access to improve their skills
- Procurement above certain amount have social values in criteria
- Working with suppliers to redirect committed social value towards cost of living
- Factoring the cost of living into funding bids

Cross sector partnerships and collaboration

- Leeds City Council breakthrough project and silver cost of living cross-sector task and finish group to help share knowledge and ideas on what works and what more is needed
- Organisations working together to identify most vulnerable groups
- Building innovative new partnerships
- Using networks to bring services together and to combine support
- Leeds Anchor Network focusing on local spend, social value and providing secure jobs which pay the real living wage etc.
- Leeds Community Anchor Network established and ready to build on
- Voluntary Action Leeds sharing resource
- Mutual cooperative - grass roots discussion and building on this further
- Focus on collaborative and coordinated approaches (rather than competition) with a direct link to communities
- Councillors building on positive relationships with third sector built during COVID as a route to co-produce a response to the cost of living crisis
- Coordination of debt support

Business action

- Chamber of Commerce lobbying on issues for businesses
- Difficult trading conditions (pressure on spending and higher overheads on energy and materials) stimulating small businesses individually and jointly to respond with new offers
- Clarion's measurement of social value and provision of grants/advice via their foundation

5) Panel Session

Panellists:

- *Phil Andrew, Chief Executive, StepChange Debit Charity*
- *Revd Canon Arun Arora, Bishop of Kirkstall*
- *Hannah Bailey, Chief Officer, Voluntary Action Leeds*
- *Eileen Brown, Customer Experience Director, Northern Gas Networks (NGN)*
- *Kidist Teklemariam, Director, Unleashing Refugee Potential and Community Commissioner, Leeds Poverty Truth Commission*

The panel Chair, Cllr Debra Coupar (Leeds City Council's Executive Member for Resources and Deputy Leader) asked the panel to consider three questions, with key points set out below.

Question 1: Please provide your reflections on Dame Julia Unwin's keynote speech

- Eileen noted that the address resonated with what NGN are seeing in respect to 'crisis fatigue' amongst their customers and that whilst the business is providing immediate crisis support, it is also to carefully considering how this could be sustained in the face of a crisis that was unlikely to end quickly.
- Hannah reflected on points regarding community trauma and experience on the back of the pandemic and how this has rolled straight into the cost of living crisis. She wanted to see the city step back and consider its collective response as part of a compassionate city that does not want to normalise destitution but instead find radical ideas to take action forward.
- Reverend Arun highlighted the comments regarding the potential for toxic voices to heighten the anger and incite communities to look for someone or people to blame and that there was a need as such for places to reconfirm a shared narrative against this.
- Kidist welcomed a focus on procurement and how sub-contract arrangements can be used to instil better pay, treatment and fairness for employees.
- Phil stressed that his organisation is getting to the point where 35% of cases presented to them can no longer be helped via routes such as supporting people on income or benefit maximisation, in other words, support is unable to get them to the monthly breakeven point needed to stabilise their situation.

Twitter: Cllr Andrew Scopes: *StepChange will have c6m people contacting them for help this year and think the peak of demand for their services will be next April. In this context the Government is cutting their funding by £8m. This could be devastating for many people in our city!*

Question 2: What impacts are you seeing in your organisations?

- Eileen noted that NGN's field based staff (who visit homes on a day to day basis to make safe any issues with gas supplies) are seeing things like customers choosing to live downstairs as they do not want to heat the whole house or use their stair lifts; people reducing use of essential medical equipment such as kidney dialysis machines; and unsafe behaviours such as using cookers to heat rooms, bringing BBQs inside to cook and blocking vents to reduce drafts – all things that can create serious issues in regards to carbon monoxide, the silent killer. Their staff are specially trained to talk to people to understand their needs, but are finding people to be less receptive to their advice as they want to be warm but do not have the money to spend on conventional – and safe – heating.
- Hannah identified that the voluntary and community sector is seeing a high mental health toll in communities, and more and more people being pushed into needing support but who

have never navigated the system before and so are struggling. The resilience of communities – and the VCS sector – is being tested like never before, with a sense that there is no end in sight further amplifying anxiety.

- Reverend Arun stressed a situation of increased need and costs but supported by falling donations, with warm spaces and food banks for example seeing big increases in both referrals and self-referrals and providers of these services taking valiant efforts to humanise the system so that it looks at people and not just their needs. He described a situation where: *“the safety net is torn – charities are being forced to stop feeding the hungry so that they can feed the starving.”*
- Phil expects that 6m people will contact StepChange this year, and that that will not peak until spring 2023 when the post-Christmas credit bills hit and the impact of interest rates on mortgage repayments bites.
- Kidist is seeing *“organisations being stretched beyond viability”* due to more and more people having to ask for help and now having to turn new referrals away. This is having a significant impact on the mental health of people who are desperately in need of help.

Question 3: What change would you like to see so that people can thrive?

- Eileen called for more sharing of knowledge and experience between partners that work with communities to better serve those needing support. For example, NGN have trained their staff in the *Making Every Contact Count* approach so that when frontline staff come across customers needing help, they refer them well to support that they know is available and follow through to make sure it has been delivered.
- Hannah focused on the need to continue to prioritise initiatives at community level, for partnership working in distributing the Household Support Fund so that it gets to the right places, and for co-ordination in delivering Warm Spaces and championing of the good work being done.
- Reverend Arun suggested utilising the expertise of all the people in the room to affirm a counternarrative of hope - building on the power of place and community - without minimising the crisis at hand. Sharing the positives about what we are all doing would be a powerful start, collating examples from everybody at this event.
- Phil asked that everybody strives to get people who need debt advice to StepChange as soon as possible, as the longer you wait the harder it is to help. He also sought a ban on forced installation of pre-payment meters and for authorities not to take up debts to them from those struggling to pay for 12 months (including a Universal Credit sanction moratorium).
- Kidist called for collaboration with health and social workers, housing officers and others to signpost individuals in desperate need to help, to recognise impacts on the self-employed and small businesses, for everybody to pay the living wage, and for there to be no benefit

cuts. She emphasised that businesses and agencies should look at their outsourced contracts and make sure people are paid fairly and consistently in their supply chains.



Source: Tom Riordan, Twitter

6) Keynote Speaker: Tracy Brabin, Mayor of West Yorkshire

The Mayor opened by stressing how encouraged she was by the compassion and empathy evident in the room. She went on to set out the challenge facing us locally, actions already in process, and further opportunities ahead.

In terms of **the challenges**, the Mayor noted that:

- We have moved from the hardship of COVID to the energy crisis and the cost of basics rising sharply. This is expected to get worse before it gets better.
- West Yorkshire's starting position coming into this crisis was already worse than most regions:
 - a third of residents are living in the poorest 20% of neighbourhoods in England
 - standing charges on energy are higher in West Yorkshire than anywhere else in the country (something that the mayor is raising with Government)
 - nearly a fifth of people are spending 90% of more of their income on basics
 - a third of adults have less than £100 in savings
 - things are even worse for the poorest and many people have nothing left to cut
- All of this is impacting on physical and mental health
- The impact is on businesses as well as families, and a high proportion are concerned about their survival. 2,000 West Yorkshire firms – collectively employing 57,000 people - are energy intensive and compete internationally, presenting major challenges
- Local authorities are doing their best to help but cannot plug all the gaps in the face of cost pressures after having faced years of cuts themselves
- There is vital action by the voluntary sector and communities against this backdrop, for example through food banks, bed banks and other support

The Mayor noted that despite this gloomy outlook, we still need to tackle the challenge with positive action to build an inclusive, sustainable and just economy. She described **new action** that the West Yorkshire Combined Authority is taking to help people and businesses:

- Establishing the Mayor's Cost of Living Emergency Fund which will provide £3 million over the next 18 months to help the most vulnerable by addressing issues like food insecurity, fuel poverty and mental health. Support will be delivered in partnership with local authorities and through local charities and voluntary organisations that are providing services, such as food banks, warm places and debt advice.
- Working to create and support jobs, including investing in skills for growth and extending eligibility for free training to all those earning below the Real Living Wage to widen access to employment and progression routes to more low paid workers.
- Turbocharging investment in home energy retrofit to cover 3,000 households instead of the initial 1,300 – helping those in social housing to reduce bills and manage strained budgets.

This action followed on from the introduction of 'Mayor's Fares' to bring down the cost of a single bus ticket across West Yorkshire to a maximum of £2 and £4.50 for a day ticket.

Despite the challenges, the Mayor stressed the importance of striving towards a positive future. That includes opportunities such as Leeds 2023 Year of Culture; Bradford as UK City of Culture 2025, jobs in the digital and tech sector and a new Digital Skills Plan; green jobs and transition to a low carbon economy; and Inclusion, Diversity and Equity as a golden thread so that success benefits everyone. Summing up, her concluding message was a call to “*turn anger into hope for a better future.*”

7) Second Table Discussion: Opportunities for Further Action Together

The second table discussion focused on action, asking two interrelated questions, the key points of which are set out below, including those captured via the Slido online facility, and grouped into themes. The responses are a verbatim account of input received.

Question 1: What can we do together to build a more secure future for people and businesses in Leeds?

Communication and awareness of support

There were many suggestions for how advice and support could be better collated, for the channels it could be communicated through, and for the manner/tone of that communication:

- Better methods of communicating existing help are needed – we need a communications strategy to emphasise the support available and promote the work being done
- Create a definitive, universal directory of support services, including the third sector and charities. Could universities assist with creating and maintaining this asset mapping?
- Signposting is crucial (including through community hubs) as people don't know where to go or what to do. Need to better signpost services and make everyone aware.
- Better training for colleagues going into people's homes so they are able to help the most vulnerable and signpost support
- Create and share a cost of living support book for frontline support
- Flag the cost of living website to front line Leeds City Council workers
- New website and leaflets with advice and links to resources and help
- Raise awareness, knowledge and understanding of the crisis
- Do not rely on written material alone – communicate help/advice in short social media videos that can be easily shared, presented by people within the target communities
- Use known brands e.g. Leeds United FC, to promote services and make them accessible
- Use ambassadors and/or pop-up shops to highlight needs of community/charity organisations and signpost support
- Core messaging – seek support quickly, do not wait
- Ensure there is face to face advice available
- Treat people accessing help in a dignified way. Give people back their worth as so many people don't believe they are worthy of help.
- Be visible and present
- Stress the importance of seeking advice early

Sharing good practice and linking support offers

Participants stressed how organisations could better connect their support offers and share and promote good practice:

- Shout about positives and achievement
- Share information – and not just digitally
- Build links to other services, e.g. Credit Union boiler support
- Get better at sharing across the sectors
- Amplify stories of good examples and neighbourliness in communities. Identify what is working well and shout about what's happening.

Communities, co-design/co-production and local focus

There was a lot of focus on and many suggestions around the importance of listening to and working with communities at local level to develop and deliver solutions:

- Do things with people not to people
- Local people to advise on decision and policy making
- Get out into communities and listen to pick up issues - really look at our local communities
- Co-produce with the people within our communities. To build together everyone needs a seat at the table, e.g. hear more from people with direct lived experience.
- Identify and utilise local role models who are representative of local communities
- Focus on hyperlocal place working
- Develop a new model of locality working within Leeds City Council
- Develop and utilise Community Anchors and neighbourhood networks
- Make better use of Community Committees and HAPs. As part of that, engage groups at the coal face to review Community Committees and make them more effective.
- Make good use of Youth Advisory Panels
- Successful community hub (different to council community hub operations) ventures are best delivered from town/district centre venues. Citywide voluntary organisation offers should also be tailored to ensure bespoke support for particular communities.
- Expand community social aid, e.g. roll out 'CRAP' (conserving resources and associating people) initiatives across the city
- Use community development as a catalyst to bring people together
- Promote collective spirit, neighbourliness, kindness and strong communities

Networks and partnership

A range of points were made about strengthening collaboration and breaking down barriers:

- More partnership working to bring services together in a co-ordinated response
- Grow and enhance existing partnerships
- Bring relevant people and boards together
- Improve networking
- National welfare provision isn't sufficient to address the problems. Leeds has very collaborative and strong networks, but they need to get even more effective.
- Facilitate skills swaps between organisations
- Break down silos between community groups and collaborate rather than compete

- Mutual support/network for leaders of community organisations and charities
- Mutual aid networks – providing skills and money help and advice
- Get more younger people involved in neighbourhood networks
- The third sector provides a trusted safe space and role which is not part of 'the system', but it can't replace statutory services. Build innovative partnerships to get the best of both.
- Ensure this issue is everyone's business and gain buy-in from everyone

Third sector outreach, sustainability and service delivery

There was considerable focus on the value of the third sector and how it could be supported:

- Use organisations such as Poverty Truth to engage those with lived experience and reach those in need
- Work with trusted organisations to provide services
- Make sure third sector organisations are looked after - keep funding and supporting them and create a support fund centrally or for each ward
- More support for community organisations as they are very close to the problem – and continue support for what is already in place and working well
- Support the resilience of third sector organisations whose business model is under pressure from the cost of living crisis, e.g. volunteers, travel costs, premises
- Develop community groups to be self sufficient
- Set up food pantries/enable them to be self-sufficient by building skills (with user input)
- Connect the third sector and digital services
- Mutual cooperative grass roots discussion
- Revive Covid-style community hubs to give a focal point, e.g. for matching volunteers with the help and needs that are out there
- Support for the voluntary workforce who hear about other people's traumas and need a place to speak to 'get it off their chest' - share experience and gain mutual support

Funds, money and buying local

Ideas covered securing and accessing funding, circulating money locally and paying workers properly:

- Create and communicate better information regarding funding opportunities
- Create a funding/bidding toolkit that is accessible to all – potentially funded by businesses, or put in place other support for funding bids, possibly assisted by university knowledge
- Revise use of existing funds e.g. Community Infrastructure Levy to provide communal facilities
- Move from short term grants to 3 year commitments and end short-term funding mentality for social action projects. Projects need long term funding to really make a difference.
- Prioritise funding to independent partnerships and community support around poverty
- Offer rates relief for charities
- Create a support fund centrally or in each ward similar to Covid community hubs
- Collaboratively lobby the private sector for financial support
- Take action to support community wealth building and recirculation of local money
- Focus on 'the Leeds pound' and local procurement

- Promote shopping local, eating local, etc
- Use procurement to make suppliers offer fair employment terms and conditions
- Outsource to better companies
- Proactively give contracts to people in the community that need help e.g. cleaners
- Pay the living wage and make sure low skilled people still have an appropriate livelihood
- Welfare support, cash grants and more finance through the household support fund
- Better access to affordable loans, e.g. credit union to combat loan sharks

Businesses and their connections to communities

Participants talked about both the needs of businesses and how they could help communities:

- Provide and promote support for entrepreneurs/those starting businesses
- Support for small businesses, including businesses outside city centres
- More engagement with small and micro enterprises to deliver grass roots responses
- Businesses to connect with the 3rd sector and communities. Be aware of what help is out there for people and use aggregators like Leeds Community Foundation, Ahead Partnership and Voluntary Action Leeds to make connections.
- Consider how the city can support the private sector to make meaningful CSR contributions. Have a clear ask of businesses that want to volunteer - ask what they do already, what else they can do (not just financial) and seek appropriate help and meaningful engagement.
- Businesses to reach out to organisations to assist their staff

The contribution of Anchor Institutions

The role, value and local contribution of large organisations rooted in Leeds was welcomed:

- Roll out and refine work with and by anchor institutions in Leeds to maximise their value
- Use anchor institutions to promote available help, and also where people can go to help
- Identify practical actions anchors can take to help
- Ask universities to lend different skills or support bid writing
- Keep bigger organisations in the city e.g. Red Cross, John Lewis
- Build on the anchors progression framework assessment tool for businesses
- Use influence to nudge businesses to help make a difference
- Further connect the community anchors network to the Leeds Inclusive Anchors network
- Anchor organisations can help on cost of living health concerns e.g. OFFLOAD initiative to prevent male suicides in West Leeds supported by Leeds Rhinos and LCF

Employment and skills

The importance of building skills and routes into good jobs that pay well was emphasised:

- Help people to train for and apply for jobs, and greater focus on free skills/training
- More training for people on low incomes and benefits
- Build skills required for retrofitting housing – meet sector needs and a route into green jobs
- Use automation to release and re skill lower paid workers
- Work with businesses to grow recruitment opportunities and open people's eyes to them
- Demonstrate opportunities for progression
- Develop/apply planning rules around local employment opportunities

- Actively address diversity in the workplace
- Build long term sustainability through having/supporting a healthy and happy workforce
- Think about how we support the 50 - 60 age group who often fall through the net e.g. assist older employees with digital skills

Resilience, capacity building and early intervention

Some points focused on prevention and how to enable people/communities to help themselves:

- Early intervention to prevent people reaching crisis point
- Put focus on capacity building and resilience
- Self-care
- Help break reliance on handouts
- Think about long term impact on economy and communities so they don't become 'left behind'
- Extend the Stronger Families project - it has delivered

Education and knowledge (to help people deal with cost of living crisis)

Skills, education and knowledge that would help adults and young people were highlighted:

- Training on life skills and budgeting
- Increase knowledge of low energy cooking and other energy saving measures
- Increase digital access and literacy
- Extra awareness in schools
- Educate/teach young people to be resilient

Environment, energy and housing

Points ranged from practical action to meet needs to new and long-term approaches:

- Develop and deliver circular economy solutions
- Retrofit more housing
- Provide funding/loans for insulation – 'green mortgages'
- Reframe the way we see nature in our lives and in our city - where you can see trees out of the window there is much better rates of DV, health, mental health, etc
- Train people in permaculture to support resilience
- Incentivise cooperative housing and people using vacant space
- Selective licensing of private sector landlords

Health system

- How to improve understanding of GPs of the support and services in local area – role for Local Care Partnerships
- NHS - Local care partnerships. Many only took over during Covid, but they are a key link. GP practices could be signposting holistic support in our third sector.

Economic model, lobbying, advocacy and fundamental reforms

Discussion ranged from local economic development to national systems and radical reforms:

- Inclusive growth should be a condition/requirement for growth and funding
- Include poverty and inequality in every discussion of economic innovation and productivity
- Hold organisations to scrutiny that are spending our money in Leeds
- Raise income from a tourist tax and parking levy
- Lobby for a national emergency fund
- Don't just tinker - seize the opportunity to restructure and reframe and advocate for Universal Basic Income so no one needs to be destitute, and no child grows up in poverty
- Push for a four day week for same pay across the city
- Structural and systemic change - fair pay and conditions for every job, renationalise essential services, a proper welfare state and fully funded NHS and social care services
- Campaign to reduce standing charges on fuel bills; get rid of pre-payment meters
- System change to tackle inequality. Honesty/openness about poverty, change the narrative to reframe paternalism, move on from sticking plaster mentality, ask the difficult questions.
- We do not need to grow as a city, we need to thrive

Twitter: Cllr Annie Maloney: *Some really interesting discussions with our public, private and third sector. It can't be underestimated how dangerous this crisis is and how many lives really are at risk.*

Question 2: What is one new thing you can do to help minimise the worst impacts of rising costs?

Fuel and food

- Run door to door foodbank collections
- Run a fuel bank
- Campaign to reduce standing charges on fuel bills; get rid of pre-payment meters

Mental health

- Have a community mental health nurse on site
- More partnership working on mental health

Community engagement and codesign

- Keep working with local people to help make public health decisions
- Take away learning and actions from today and run the ideas past a group of our poorest communities as a critical friend, including community champions with hyper local networks and groups that can test whether the things we are doing/propose will work

Funds and money

- Create a 'Leeds Fund' funded by businesses to support charities dealing with poverty, etc
- Set up a fund for educational attainment and sports for children living in poverty in Leeds

- Pay the living wage and be a good employer
- Keep focus on community wealth building and the Leeds pound – do not outsource to companies because they are cheapest when they treat their workers poorly

Communication and awareness

- Make people aware of what is available
- Make sure families and schools have been contacted by organisations that can help them
- Signpost leaflets/booklets summarising help advice and translate these into BSL and braille and the required range of languages
- Magpie to be able to work with the NHS and the council to help them create behaviour change campaigns to support our community

Collaboration and networks

- Community groups to better communicate what their offer is, to each other and to policy makers
- Engage local groups to make Community Committees more effective and representative
- Improve networks with third sector organisations to create better coverage
- Bring together groups in a Network of Networks (e.g. Poverty Truth, Leeds FAN, Debt Forums, Leeds Migration Partnership, Street Support, Homeless Charter, Forum Central, Voluntary Action Leeds). That could help with challenges like temporary funding when there is potentially a huge amount of money forecasted (if not guaranteed) to come into Leeds.

Dialogue, community spirit, hope and fight

- Get the dialogue started around the conversation about poverty and taking away the shame
- It's important for this not to be normalised - for us to keep fighting and keep hope!
- Promote collective spirit, neighbourliness, kindness and strong communities

Other specific points/ideas

- More freedom to support people during half term holidays
- Improve access to healthy holiday programmes
- Sign up to be a Winter Friend to support those in your community
- Advocate for changing our relationship with nature
- Build maths skills so that people better understand bills and budgeting

8) Actions and Close

Cllr Jonathan Pryor, Leeds City Council's Executive Board Member for Economy, Culture and Education and Deputy Leader, closed the event and thanked all of the speakers and participants. He stressed that the impact of the crisis cannot and must not be underestimated and the importance of facing up to the crisis now and building strategically for the future. Whilst there is much good work underway, the focus must remain resolutely on acting as Team Leeds to go further together as compassionate city.

Annex 1: Implications and Action Opportunities for the City and Stakeholders

The event highlighted good practice and action opportunities for the city of Leeds working together as a whole, and for specific sectors within it. We summarise key opportunities below, building on existing activity and with actions that are specific to businesses and third sector organisations drawn out. A separate annex follows with specific action points for large/public anchors, many of which overlap with the themes below.

Overall city action opportunities

- 1) Work in partnership to develop a **shared strategy for collating and communicating sources of available advice and support**. This should consider the mechanisms for communicating what is available that leverage diverse channels, brands and signposting opportunities, and have a shared narrative and approach regarding the manner and tone of communication.
- 2) Look for opportunities to **strengthen collaboration across sectors, break down barriers to partnership working, and better connect support offers** to drive reach, efficiency and impact on people and places with an ethos that empowers all partners to ‘play to their strengths’.
- 3) **Share ideas and good practice** between partners, celebrating positive impact and stories in communities, and systematically cross-promoting services.
- 4) **Listen to and work with communities at a (hyper) local level** to amplify citizen voice and lived experience in developing and delivering solutions that can make the biggest difference.
- 5) Continue to recognise the **value, reach and impact of the third sector** in supporting people and communities at this time of crisis, building on excellent partnerships built during the pandemic and with a focus on the sector’s sustainability and resilience. Consider how businesses and public bodies can offer practical support such as skills-sharing and supporting local funds.
- 6) Continue to work locally and advocate for the city as part of TeamLeeds, support the Best City Ambition, and take a firm stance on adopting an **economic model centred on inclusivity, compassion and sustainability** in the face of pressure to focus on growth alone.
- 7) Whatever your organisational type or sector, look for every opportunity to **think and act like an anchor in your place** – across how you employ, how you spend, how you deliver, your environmental footprint and your civic contribution.
- 8) Continue to **jointly develop and amplify a strong narrative** around shared leadership and responsibility (the TeamLeeds approach), clearly articulating the role of organisations and sectors in tackling poverty and inequalities and improving the lives of everyone in the city. Nurture existing partnerships, and actively seek opportunities to bring others on board.

Third sector specific opportunities

- 1) Become part of, further develop your role in, or **deliver shared action to support communities through the Leeds Community Anchors Network**. Use this to identify opportunities for collaboration; sharing ideas, learning and good practice; and communicating to others – be that partners in other sectors or people and communities.
- 2) Continue to regularly review your activities, services and interactions with communities, **and take any opportunities to further heighten your positive impact** as an organisation e.g. by more local procurement, being a good employer, providing access to mental health support and enhancing your environmental and climate impact.
- 3) **Continue to assist with communication and awareness of support and advice** to help individuals and communities facing challenges. Advise on the communication channels to use to reach target audiences, how to communicate messages clearly and with impact, and directly help to get information to the people and communities who need it most, including at hyper-local level.
- 4) **Continue to directly deliver practical support and help that makes a difference** to people and communities e.g., warm spaces, food pantries, debt/money advice, energy efficiency support and other activities.
- 5) Use existing third sector networks to strengthen **mutual support mechanisms**, recognising the intense pressure third sector staff and volunteers are under in supporting people and communities in the current climate, who themselves need support and a place to share and empathise with others in a similar position.

Private sector specific opportunities

- 1) **Think through what you can do to help across your activities, products/services, and interactions with customers**. Take advantage of tools such as the *Business Anchors Progression Framework* which enables self-assessment of your current position and highlights future action opportunities related to employment, procurement, environment and assets, corporate functions and community roles.
- 2) **Direct more procurement spend locally and in ways which deliver social value** e.g. awarding contracts to local companies and seeking social and environmental benefits from suppliers (e.g. preferring those who treat their workers fairly and pay the real living wage).
- 3) Continue to **support the lowest paid members of your workforce** through paying the real living wage, offering fair terms and conditions, and providing opportunities and support for progression.

- 4) Promote and signpost **advice and support for staff and service users/customers** that will help them reduce their cost of living and deal with the crisis e.g. on debt and financial advice, energy saving measures and mental health support.
- 5) **Connect with the third sector and communities.** Be aware of what help is out there for people and use aggregators like Leeds Community Foundation, Ahead Partnership and Voluntary Action Leeds to make connections.
- 6) Further **enable and encourage staff to volunteer** to support third sector organisations and/or communities, with onus on fully utilising their skills and adding value - for example through technical and fundraising tasks, not just basic manual ones.
- 7) Consider **contributing to local funds** to help local communities and service users manage during the cost of living crisis.

Annex 2: Implications and Action Opportunities for Anchor Organisations

Discussions and presentations during the event spotlighted and praised the roles of anchor organisations and action they are taking, including the public sector and utilities focused Leeds Anchors Network, community anchor organisations and business anchors. Here we summarise key implications and action opportunities for anchors – especially for larger anchors in the Leeds Anchors Network – that have emerged from this event. Many anchors are already taking action on these points, but there is opportunity for anchors to widen, intensify and share existing action and to take forward new actions themselves or collaboratively. The action opportunities list below is intended to assist that process, and will be discussed at the Leeds Inclusive Anchors Network Executive Group on 23 March 2023 and incorporated into the network’s business plan.

- 1) Redouble efforts to **use procurement to spend more locally and promote social value** – that includes taking opportunities to award (below threshold) contracts to local companies (e.g. for cleaning and catering); to raise awareness of the pipeline of future procurement to potential local suppliers; and to seek social value and fair treatment of workers (e.g. paying the real living wage) when awarding contracts or outsourcing.
- 2) Continue to **support the lowest paid members of the workforce** through paying the living wage, fair terms and conditions, and providing opportunities and support for progression.
- 3) Further provide, promote and signpost **advice and support for staff and service users/customers** that will help them reduce their cost of living and deal with the crisis e.g. on debt and financial advice, energy saving measures and ‘green doctor’ reviews, travel and health. Consider whether any of this support could be more efficiently delivered jointly by anchors or widened in reach.
- 4) Build on and maximise the impact of often excellent **mental health support** for staff given the extra pressures people are facing, and seek to support community mental health initiatives alongside sports and community anchor organisations. That could include preventative measures to reduce stress and anxiety, for example related to workload, trauma of helping those needing support, and enabling access to green space and exercise.
- 5) Provide **accessible warm spaces** and opportunities for staff who are home working to come into the office/premises for warmth.
- 6) **Engage with local communities and community anchors** to help design and inform support that those in need can benefit from, and further strengthen links between the Leeds Anchors Network and community anchors.
- 7) Collate and **share information about your measures and practices** with anchor institutions and others, regularly update this and proactively communicate what works best.
- 8) **Map the support available across the city and collate this into single guides/summaries** which can be easily accessed and tailored to different audience – including front line workers engaging with potentially vulnerable people / communities and service users / customers seeking support. Ensure this is kept up to date.

- 9) Maintain and **implement a shared communications strategy** to maximise awareness of the support available. This should ensure communications are made available in different languages, in BSL/Braille, and can be accessed in non-digital forms. Use of non-written mechanisms should also be considered to widen e.g. short videos that can be shared by families and friends via social media.
- 10) Individual anchors to work with community anchor organisations to **create strong and enduring local links to disadvantaged communities** that are close (or otherwise connected) to them, and to use these to enable communities to better access support and services available through all anchors.
- 11) Further **enable and encourage staff to volunteer** to support third sector organisations and/or communities, with onus on fully utilising their skills and adding value - for example through technical and fundraising tasks, not just basic manual ones.
- 12) Consider **contributing to local funds** including those coordinated by Leeds Community Foundation to help local communities and service users manage during the cost of living crisis.