

Leeds City Listening Project - Update 2021

Date: 22nd September 2021

Report of: Director of Communities, Housing and Environment

Report to: Executive Board

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

What is this report about?

Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions

- This report provides an update on the 2020 Leeds City Listening project. In April 2019 the council were successful in their bid for funding for the Leeds City Listening Project. The City Listening programme of work was targeted at marginalised women in communities who face multiple barriers to achieving their potential, particularly those who are likely to live in poverty, suffer from inequality and who are the furthest away from mainstream involvement and engagement.
- The project included a total of 112 focus groups which took place between May 2019 and March 2020 allowing engagement with 1390 women. As trust was a barrier for many women, partners ran a total of 32 focus groups on behalf of the council. This approach was undertaken because they had a pre-existing relationship and level of trust with the women we wanted to engage with.
- Although a large number of topics were discussed at the focus groups, 10 areas were identified by the women who engaged in the focus groups as their main priorities. These 10 key areas were used as the recommendations in the report.
- Since the project ended in March 2020, there have been a number of positive outcomes as a direct result of the focus groups taking place. This included new peer support groups forming, existing groups meeting more frequently and groups recruiting more women volunteers to support new members.
- The Leeds City Listening Report was circulated to all the partners and organisations who took part in the project, the report has also been sent to directorates, teams and groups who support women from many of the communities represented in the City Listening Project. Further partnership working has also taken place with partners including Women's Lives Leeds.
- Further engagement work that has taken place since March 2020 has highlighted how the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the inequalities faced by many women in the City.

Recommendations

- a) Approve the City Listening Project update report;
- b) Continue to ensure the voice of women is heard in key council work, for example;

- Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Working Group
 - City Centre violence Against Women and Girls Thematic Working Group
 - Period poverty
 - Forgotten Women Project
 - Women Friendly City
- c) Support the work that is currently ongoing in collaboration between the West Yorkshire Mayor's office and Leeds City Council in regard to Violence Against Women and Girls;
- d) Continue partnership working between Leeds City Council and Women's Lives Leeds; and
- e) Note that the Director of Communities, Housing and Environment is responsible for the implementation of decisions made by Executive Board in respect of this report.

Why is the proposal being put forward?

- 1 The Leeds City Listening Project found many women still face barriers when accessing services and they also face disproportionate issues around social isolation, prejudice and hate crime.
- 2 The focus groups held with women identified a large number of topics and issues. 10 areas were identified by the women who engaged in the focus groups as their main priorities. These 10 key areas were used to create the recommendations in the report. The 10 areas were:-
 - Mental and Physical Health and the Health Service
 - Family and Culture
 - Housing and Homelessness
 - Children and the Education System
 - Language Barriers
 - Financial Issues- Employment, Benefits, Accessing Financial Services
 - Community Safety
 - Aspiration and Confidence
 - Local issues
 - Domestic Violence
- 3 Since March 2020, there have already been several positive outcomes as a direct result of the work that took place. This included new peer support groups forming, existing groups meeting more frequently, groups recruiting more women volunteers to support new members or to help running additional sessions and organisations running more sessions that mirrored the City Listening format so they could continue to hear directly from women about what issues affect them.
- 4 Since March 2020, the findings from the Leeds City Listening Project have fed into key areas of work to help shape to improve support for women in the City. This has included work on ending violence against women and girls and continued partnership working with Women's Lives Leeds. Further details are outlined in appendix 1.
- 5 The Leeds City Listening Project completed in March 2020, which coincided with the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Work that has taken place since March 2020 has demonstrated that there is still a disproportionate or differential impact on inequality on

women in the City which has been exacerbated by COVID-19. This highlights that work needs to continue to address social, structural, and economic inequalities to ensure they do not worsen.

- 6 Since this work was completed Adults and Health have commenced consultation on access to services which they have branded City Listening Project, work will take place to identify opportunities to integrate elements of these projects.
- 7 These findings, along with other views expressed in relation to safety, have helped inform the Leeds and West Yorkshire bids submitted to the Safer Streets Fund Round 3 (focused on Violence Against Women and Girls) and the Safety of Women at Night Fund. The findings will also be used by a newly established collaborative working group which will be chaired by the Deputy Leader of Council and Executive Member for Resources. This working group will develop the partnership arrangements for developing the Leeds response to the Government's Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy which was launched in July 2021. The findings from the City Listening Project will be used to inform this work. This work and the outcome of the City Listening project will link to the West Yorkshire Mayors initiative of keeping women and girls safe at the heart of the policing plan.

What impact will this proposal have?

Wards Affected:

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

- 8 Tackling poverty and reducing inequalities is fundamental to the Best City and the Best Council Plan and work was already in progress by the council and its partners to address it prior to the COVID-19 pandemic emergency.
- 9 Leeds City Council will continue work to ensure the voices of women in the City are heard. Working closely with partners to tackle poverty and inequality, understanding the issues that affect women is integral to this as poverty disproportionately impacts on them.
- 10 This is an update report with no decisions required so it is not necessary to conduct an Equality Impact Assessment.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

- 11 This report provides a progress update on the Leeds City Listening Project which included consultation and engagement through 112 focus groups and with 1390 women.
- 12 Since the Leeds City Listening Project engagement ended in March 2020, there has been further engagement with women via the Women's Lives Leeds COVID-19 survey and the Women's Lives Leeds Women's Safety survey. Both of these survey's have offered the opportunity for wider reaching engagement and for the effects of COVID-19 on women to be taken into account.

- 13 Any future consultation will take place through existing mechanisms such as Women's Lives Leeds, Community Groups and tenants groups.

What are the resource implications?

- 14 There are no additional resource implications arising from this report.

What are the legal implications?

- 15 There are no legal implications arising from this report

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 16 Any risks associated with specific work would be addressed as part of service delivery.

Does this proposal support the council's 3 Key Pillars?

- Inclusive Growth Health and Wellbeing Climate Emergency

- 17 The Leeds City Listening Project seeks to support the Best Council Plan priorities and help to underpin the ambition for Leeds to be the best city in the UK: the best city in the UK: compassionate and caring with a strong economy; which tackles poverty and reduces inequalities

Options, timescales and measuring success

a) What other options were considered?

- 18 No other options were considered.

b) How will success be measured?

- 19 Each of the recommendations will be monitored to ensure work progresses well and the Leeds City Listening Project will continue to feed into wider programmes of work.

c) What is the timetable for implementation?

- 20 Work has been taking place since the Leeds City Listening report was agreed at Executive Board in April 2020 and is ongoing.

Appendices

- 21 Appendix 1- City Listening Update 2021

Background papers

- 22 None.