

# Leeds

# **Best City Ambition**

## **Tackling Poverty and Inequality**

Health and Wellbeing • Inclusive Growth • Zero Carbon

**2024 UPDATE - CONSULTATION DRAFT**  
TEXT VERSION – DESIGN WORK TO FOLLOW

## **Foreword**

Our ambition is for Leeds to be the Best City in the UK – where we work together in partnership to achieve our goals, proud of our strengths and track record of success, but focused fiercely on tackling poverty and reducing inequalities wherever we can.

Times are hard. Over a decade of austerity, paired with rampant inflation and a cost-of-living crisis have inevitably had an impact on the public services which people rely on, and created new challenges for businesses, organisations and families in every part of our great city. Leeds has proven itself time and again to be a resilient place and while the coming months and years will be challenging, I have no doubt we will remain an ambitious, vibrant and compassionate place to live, work, study or visit.

The Best City Ambition sets out a positive vision for the future of Leeds – one which recognises the amazing strengths and opportunities we still have. Our economy is growing and continues to attract investment making Leeds a better place to do business and a great place to live. The partnerships which drive our efforts to improve the health and wellbeing of our population are as good as you will find anywhere in the country. And Leeds is once again leading the way in demonstrating how we can meaningfully tackle climate change, recently being one of only 119 global cities to receive the highest 'A grade' by the Carbon Disclosure Project.

To be the best city Leeds must be a place where everyone can reach their potential, and I'm proud of our continued focus on supporting the most vulnerable in our society. As budgets get tighter – for the council and its partners – maximising the impact of investment into prevention and early intervention will take on even more importance.

We won't be able to do everything we would like to, that is clear, but by embracing the Team Leeds spirit that has been seen so often we have the best possible chance to continue to improve people's lives locally and promote everything Leeds has to offer nationally and internationally. When resources are stretched thin, it is more important than ever that we come together and support each other to pursue the shared goals we set out here.

We can all play a part in making Leeds the best city, one that is inclusive, compassionate, welcoming and ambitious in the face of challenge. To everyone who is part of Team Leeds and will be in the future – thank you.

**Councillor James Lewis**

## Introduction

The Best City Ambition is our overall vision for the future of Leeds.

At its heart is **our mission to tackle poverty and inequality** and improve quality of life for everyone who calls Leeds home.

Our Three Pillars are at the centre of the Best City Ambition. They capture the things that will make the biggest difference to improving people's lives in Leeds up to 2030 and beyond – and many of the big challenges we face and the best opportunities we have relate to all three.

The Best City Ambition aims to help partner organisations and local communities in every part of Leeds to understand and support the valuable contribution everyone can offer – no matter how big or small – to making Leeds the Best City in the UK.

## Since we set out our Ambition...

There has been lots of feedback about the priorities which it sets out and the contributions people and organisations across Leeds are making, but we also know making progress is challenging and the cost-of-living crisis has made life a lot tougher for more people. Our drive to tackle poverty and inequality has therefore never been more important.

Over the last two years partners across the city have continued to demonstrate an extraordinary level of commitment to supporting our communities as we emerged from the pandemic and into the cost of living crisis. Together and alongside all of this work, we have refreshed our strategies to improve people's health and wellbeing and promote inclusive growth, while continuing to demonstrate national and global leadership in tackling climate change. Alongside this we have shown our commitment to reducing health inequalities through becoming a Marmot City.

As a city we have developed new tools like the Social Progress Index which can help us make better use of data and research to know if we are making a difference, as well as continuing to invest time and resources in engaging with communities directly to learn from their lived experiences.

Most importantly we have continued to strengthen our partnerships to pursue opportunities and support each other in tougher times. This update of the Best City Ambition has been informed by conversations based on honesty and openness; and continues to set out a vision that we will work together towards in the years ahead.

*“The evolution... to the Best City Ambition has been a powerful way of galvanizing partners across the city at a time of less resource.”*

Leeds City Council LGA Corporate Peer Challenge, November 2022

# Our Team Leeds Approach

Team Leeds is about supporting one another to **make Leeds the best it can be**.

It is about sharing ideas and learning, working in genuine partnership, being ambitious about our collective social, economic and environmental impact, and using our buildings, assets and other resources more collectively and creatively to deliver on shared goals.

We want to build **Team Leeds** – made up of the people who live or work here, and those who champion the city nationally and internationally. Everyone in Leeds coming together to play their part is how we will achieve our ambitions, and be in a strong position to adapt to whatever the future may hold.

When coming together in this way we have proved it is possible to overcome some of the trickiest issues we face – and that **breakthrough spirit** is at the core of what makes Team Leeds so valuable. This is even more important when the economic environment is so challenging, with rising costs affecting us all and demand for many services increasing.

We will promote and adopt the following ways of working to drive a Team Leeds approach:

1. **GOOD NEIGHBOURS** Building mutual respect and understanding between one another by working together, leading with kindness, and valuing everyone's input and experiences.
2. **COMMUNITY POWER** Empowering people to generate the positive changes they want to see, enabling communities to thrive and tackle systemic inequalities.
3. **INNOVATION IMPACT** Being evidence-led, ambitious and optimistic for the future of Leeds, sparking innovation, creativity and an entrepreneurial spirit so we can succeed in a digital world.
4. **HEALTHY SOCIETY** Recognising the impact of society, environment and our economy on the health of people in Leeds, pursuing equity for people at every stage of their life.
5. **SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY** Promoting the opportunity and responsibility for every business and organisation to create social value and engage with their local community.
6. **STRENGTH BASED** Developing community capacity and strengthening prevention, focusing on what people can do not what they can't.

# We are all Team Leeds

Leeds is made up of 812,000 people. We are proud to be a welcoming city, where our rich culture and diversity is celebrated and accessible for all. Every person in Leeds counts and should have the opportunity to contribute their strengths to Team Leeds.

Leeds doesn't have a 'top table' – we don't believe in that. The breadth and diversity of our city partnerships is a big strength – one that enables more people from a wider range of backgrounds to contribute. We are stronger and more successful as a city when we learn from the life experiences and voices of everyone.

Our Best City Ambition is by and for us all – and everyone will be involved to make it happen.

Leeds's networks of Anchors provide an important platform to come together as Team Leeds to agree and focus on collective goals, progressing our mission to tackle poverty and inequality and make Leeds the best it can be. The Anchors can provide a focal point for discussion and action while remaining more inclusive than traditional city partnership structures.

## **DIAGRAM** explaining the anchors groups.

### **Leeds Inclusive Anchors**

Leeds Inclusive Anchors Network is a group of 13 of the city's largest (mainly) public sector employers. They come together and focus on areas where they can make a difference for people as an employer, through procurement, through service delivery or as a civic partner.

[Leeds Inclusive Anchors Network](#)

### **Leeds Business Anchors**

The Leeds Business Anchors Network encourages businesses to work together, alongside other partners in the city, to maximise their positive contribution to benefit the people of Leeds.

[Leeds Business Anchors](#)

In the Third Sector, Community Anchors form part of a much wider and hugely vibrant ecosystem of local organisations and groups working closely with communities. These organisations are making a huge contribution to the priorities in the Best City Ambition, but can also act as a critical friend of statutory organisations as we strive together to achieve the best for Leeds communities.

### **Third Sector Partnership**

Cross-cutting city partnership group

### **Third Sector Leeds**

Leeds's not-for-profit policy & advocacy body

### **Local community-based forums and city-wide thematic networks**

Supporting over 3,200 local organisations and groups which make up the Leeds Third Sector

### **Leeds Community Anchor Network**

Leeds Community Anchor Network is a movement of independent local organisations promoting citizen-led activity and partnerships. In addition to their own activities, Community Anchors show generous leadership to help and support other groups and communities, as well as acting as advocates at a city level.

[Leeds Community Anchor Network](#)

## AMBITION ENABLER

### Child Friendly Leeds – 12 Wishes

We want to be the best city in the UK for children and young people to grow up in. Over 750 businesses, organisations and individuals have joined our campaign to make Leeds a Child Friendly City and have signed up to be a Child Friendly Leeds ambassador.

The voices and views of children and young people are at the heart of making Leeds a Child Friendly city and are crucial to achieving our Best City Ambition. Child Friendly Leeds has captured the views of over 80,000 children and young people in the city to identify top issues and priorities. Through a Team Leeds approach, the Child Friendly 12 wishes have been created in partnership with children and young people from Leeds, as well as key stakeholders.

The 12 Wishes are focussed on making Leeds a better city for children and young people to play, live and grow up in, where their voices are heard.

There are many other key partnerships across the city that contribute to delivering our ambitions. These are often rooted in places across Leeds or working with groups of people who share similar circumstances.

Whether it is Community Committees involving more people in local democracy, Local Care Partnerships supporting community health and wellbeing, schools and clusters ensuring every child has the best start in life, or partners like the Chamber of Commerce advocating for businesses and industry in the city – everyone is making a huge contribution which is recognised and appreciated.

Many of those working most closely with people affected by poverty and inequality are in our **vibrant Third Sector** – made up of over 3,200 organisations and groups which reach into every community across the city. Leeds needs a diverse and resilient Third Sector to be the Best City, and there are things we can all do to better understand, support and work in partnership with the sector so it can continue to make its vital contribution. The relationship between the sector and the Best City Ambition is highlighted in the new [Leeds Third Sector Strategy](#).

Together, working towards the Best City Ambition, we will continue to act and speak up for Leeds and the people who live, work or study here.

## AMBITION ENABLER

### Locality Working and Community Investment

Working at a community and neighbourhood level is how partners across Leeds are able to listen to and work with local people to deliver the most meaningful change, especially in areas where people are facing the most disadvantage. Locality working in Leeds is organised through a range of governance arrangements – including community committees, local care partnerships, priority neighbourhoods and clusters. As part of our collective efforts to achieve the Best City Ambition these different forums will strive to work effectively together, multiplying the positive difference they can make alongside a wider group of partners, especially those in the Third Sector.

Through locality working and priority setting – including by using local area plans where they exist – we will pursue opportunities to achieve additional investment at a community level. Great progress is already being made with the £24m Morley Town Deal ongoing, £15.9m secured for community investments in Holbeck, and West Yorkshire being home to the country's third Investment Zone.

## The 3 Pillars of our Best City Ambition

The Three Pillars bring together the key priorities set out in the main strategies we are working together towards. They provide a clear and coherent vision for the future of Leeds – a city where we work collectively to tackle poverty and inequality in everything we do.

The pillars are not independent of each other – in fact many of the biggest opportunities and challenges we see in Leeds sit at the centre of the three. They include a range of cross-cutting priorities which recognise that everyone has something to offer.

We take a long-term view here, an ambitious vision for the future. More detailed projects, programmes and delivery plans are outlined in supporting strategies, which have been developed in partnership and aligned to the Ambition.

## Health and Wellbeing

**Leeds will be a healthy and caring city for everyone: where those who are most likely to experience poverty improve their mental and physical health the fastest, with health and care inequalities reducing, and people being supported to thrive from early years to later life.**

To realise this ambition, Team Leeds will focus on:

- Ensuring children have the best start in life and enjoy a healthy, happy childhood, where their right to play and have fun is protected and they are free to express their views and feel heard.
- Promoting a mentally healthy city for all, where people are treated with compassion and are well-supported by their families, workplaces and communities.
- Creating a well-connected and welcoming city where every community has access to local green spaces, and people of all ages can enjoy activity that supports their mental and physical health.
- Working with housing providers, landlords, tenants and communities to provide more affordable and better quality housing, so everyone can have a home which supports good health, wellbeing and educational outcomes.
- Providing high quality care as part of an integrated system, with equitable access to essential services which support people to age well and are focused on prevention and early intervention.

## Inclusive Growth

**Leeds will be a place where we create growth in our economy that works for everyone, where people and businesses can thrive, and we work together to tackle poverty and inequality.**

To realise this ambition, Team Leeds will focus on:

- Ensuring people of all ages and backgrounds can enjoy access to education, skills development, and employment opportunities to meet their needs and the needs of a growing

economy, where businesses and educators are encouraged to invest in upskilling people and supporting them to reach their full potential.

- Supporting our businesses, organisations and social enterprises to be productive, innovative, creative, ambitious and connected to their local community, with access to the talent they need to boost productivity in a rapidly changing labour market.
- Maximising the potential of our city centre and local high streets to sustainably grow our economy, create jobs and deliver for people by investing in quality infrastructure, a transport system that will benefit our future and a vibrant public realm.
- Stimulating innovation which drives a healthier, greener and more inclusive future, growing cross-city research capacity and making Leeds a test bed for new ideas and technologies.
- Championing Leeds on the global stage by showcasing the talent and opportunity we have in the city, welcoming inward investors that want to create good jobs locally and attract top international talent.

## Zero Carbon

**Leeds aims to become the first net zero city in the UK, rapidly reducing carbon emissions and reversing the decline in biodiversity, while supporting people to make more sustainable choices which can improve their standard of living.**

To realise this ambition, Team Leeds will focus on:

- Improving transport to give people in Leeds a good alternative to car use, creating a safer and more walkable city to reduce unnecessary travel and support people to be physically active, while enabling drivers to switch to zero emission vehicles.
- Promoting a vibrant and resilient food economy for Leeds so everyone can access and enjoy a healthy diet, where more produce is grown locally, and less food is wasted.
- Making the homes we live in and the buildings we use healthier, more environmentally friendly and cheaper to run, helping to tackle fuel poverty and supporting the switch to renewable sources of energy across Leeds.
- Working together with local communities, landowners and partners to protect nature and reverse the loss of biodiversity, adopting innovative and sustainable practices which enable everyone to enjoy the benefits of abundant and thriving wildlife.
- Investing in our public spaces and infrastructure to prepare Leeds for future climate impacts, helping us adapt to climate change in a way which also improves quality of life for everyone.



## Achieving our Ambition

Tackling poverty and inequality is at the heart of our Best City Ambition. We know that across Leeds, many issues disproportionately impact some groups of people and communities, and this can make stubborn long-term challenges even more difficult to overcome.

Working with our partners we have developed a set of tools to help us regularly check in on the overall socio-economic health of our city. These overarching measures bring together longitudinal metrics which we can monitor over several years to ensure we continue to make progress and adjust our strategies accordingly. The supporting strategies contain more detailed measures that are regularly monitored by partners and partnerships.

The data and learning from monitoring progress towards achieving the Best City Ambition will be made available publicly on the [Leeds Observatory](#). All of this information will be brought together and promoted every three years through the Leeds Joint Strategic Assessment.

### **PROGRESS MONITORING FRAMEWORK:**

#### **Social Progress Index**

Leeds is pioneering the use of the Social Progress Index, a tool which can help us monitor our progress towards the Best City Ambition. The SPI looks at the quality of life in different communities, showing whether it is improving each year in allowing for people's basic human needs, supporting their wellbeing, and providing opportunity.

The SPI will help us to understand how well Leeds is doing and where our strengths and weaknesses lie. It enables policymakers, businesses, organisations and citizens to understand wellbeing at a local level, helping us to make better decisions and maximise the use of our resources towards the priorities set out in the Best City Ambition. The SPI will also contribute to the new cross-cutting Marmot City Indicators currently being developed.

#### **Community Voice**

Using the data and analysis available to us through the Social Progress Index will be invaluable in measuring our progress – but alone this is not enough. Being the 'Best City' means different things to all of us, so having the commitment and space to reflect on people's individual experiences is crucial in monitoring our progress in the future. We need to understand people's perspectives, to hear real voices and reflections which can illuminate what life in Leeds is like more powerfully than is possible through using only data.

Partners across Leeds are already connecting with communities to do this work, and it will be strengthened further by reforming community committees to make them easier for the public to engage with, and by investing in innovative approaches like the Leeds Community Anchors Network listening exercise model.

## AMBITION ENABLER

### Fairer, healthier – Leeds becoming a Marmot City

Being a Marmot City means Leeds has made a commitment to building a fairer city and reducing inequalities in health and wellbeing. It is about ensuring everyone has access to the right 'building blocks' to good health, including high-quality and secure housing, better education, reliable and well-paid jobs, and a clean environment. A fairer, healthier city is essential if we are to meet our ambition to be the best city and is connected to all three pillars of the Best City Ambition.

We will work in partnership with the Institute of Health Equity, which is led by the world-renowned expert in this field Professor Sir Michael Marmot. Together, we will develop approaches which focus on supporting people at every stage of life and help meet the needs of different communities.

## Strategies and Plans

The Best City Ambition sets out our overall vision for the future of Leeds – it is something which people can come together and collaborate around, with a shared sense of direction.

The Ambition is not a delivery plan, but it is underpinned by a range of important strategies and plans for the city, and is embedded into the business plans of key organisations in Leeds too.

**DIAGRAM** *setting our key strategies and their associated governance/delivery partnership.*

Health and Wellbeing Strategy	Health and Wellbeing Board
Inclusive Growth Strategy	Inclusive Growth Delivery Partnership
Third Sector Strategy	Third Sector Partnership
Children and Young People's Plan	Leeds Children and Young People Partnership
Age Friendly Strategy	Age Friendly Leeds Board

Further key city strategies and plans can be found here: <https://www.leeds.gov.uk/plans-and-strategies>

## AMBITION ENABLER

### City Research Strategy

Socio-economic, cultural and environmental factors drive the success of our city and the health and wellbeing of our people. Building on the Team Leeds approach taken to the Leeds JSA, we will develop a shared research strategy for the council and city, embedding this within the Best City Ambition and providing a platform for partnership-based conversations about research and evaluation which can improve the positive impact we make.

Leeds has the knowledge across our partnerships to help shape and inform realistic priorities which can be delivered, the expertise to attract significant additional funding into the city, and the relationships to develop a strong strategy rooted in engagement with communities. Embracing research and enabling more people to participate and contribute to it has huge potential to help us maximise resources and ultimately achieve more of the goals set out in the Best City Ambition.

## Team Leeds in Action

In this section, we are keen to showcase unique spotlights that demonstrate Leeds leading by example, partnership working across sectors, and not all council-led initiatives.

These will be presented in a visually interesting way, with graphic design support required.

The section will include two parts:

1. An infographic sharing facts and figures about poverty and inequality in Leeds.
2. Examples of partnership working in response – headline examples are summarised below but we will take a steer about examples that should be included – and gather these through further consultation.

Being part of Team Leeds is something which can happen at all levels, whether it be local people checking in on their neighbours or key anchor institutions investing in the local economy so everyone can benefit.

There are breakthrough examples of Team Leeds taking place right across the city that are making a difference to communities, contributing to Leeds being the best city in the UK. These partnership approaches demonstrate Leeds leading by example, showcasing collaborative and unique initiatives. You can find more examples of spotlight projects and approaches here: <https://news.leeds.gov.uk/leeds-spotlight/>

### Team Leeds Spotlight On:

- **Healthy Holidays**  
The Healthy Holidays initiative exists to provide young people who receive food related benefits an opportunity to engage with fun activities and events as well as receiving healthy meals. The programmes are delivered by Community Organisations, underpinned by partnerships between LCC, Leeds Community Foundation, and local schools.
- **Leeds Food Aid Network**  
Leeds Food Aid Network is delivering a joined-up approach to tackling food insecurity, establishing a network of food aid providers, distributors, third sector partners, and members of the public.
- **Leeds PIPES**  
Leeds PIPES is an innovative energy solution supplying heat and hot water through its network of 26.5KM worth of pipes. This initiative is delivering the heat created as a by-product of burning Leeds non-recyclable waste to almost 2,000 homes, commercial, and public buildings with ongoing plans to expand.
- **Asset Based Community Development – 10-year anniversary**  
Leeds recently marked 10 years of the pioneering Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) programme. Developed in partnership between Leeds City Council and Third Sector organisations, a key aim of ABCD is to shift power back into the hands of local communities and residents, providing them with the support and tools they need to lead on and make meaningful change in the areas they live. Currently, there are 14 ABCD sites supporting the delivery of the programme in different communities across Leeds.

- **Innovation Arc**  
The Innovation Arc is a Leeds initiative pioneering a fresh approach to collaboration, co-production, and knowledge sharing. Connecting some of the key actors in the city including universities, hospitals and the council, the arc will build on Leeds talent and support businesses to grow and test new ideas.
- **Walk Safe**  
Safer Leeds, WYCA & LCC have partnered with WalkSafe to develop a localised approach to tackling rising Violence Against Women & Girls. This app is driving community safety, allowing people to share their journey with friends, report issues or concerns anonymously, or to access a map of over 600 'Ask for Angela' venues where people can use 'Angela' as a code word to signal their need for support.
- **100% Digital Leeds – Digital Inclusion Networks**  
100% Digital Leeds co-facilitate a number of networks bringing together partners to work collaboratively to improve digital inclusion. For example, the Older People's Digital Inclusion Network is co-facilitated with Leeds Older People's Forum, bringing together citywide organisations that support and work with older people in Leeds to improve digital inclusion and participation for older people.
- **Leeds Digital Festival**  
The Leeds Digital Festival is an open, collaborative celebration of digital culture, bringing together key innovators from across business, academia and technology, The festival has gained status as the largest 'open' tech event in the UK, having grown from 50 events in 2016 to 240 in 2023.
- **Forward Leeds / Drug and Alcohol response**  
Forward Leeds is a partnership of community charities and health services working together to support over 1000 adults and young people each year to make healthy decisions about alcohol and drugs the prevention, intervention and tailored programmes.
- **Tackling Homelessness**  
Leeds invests heavily in the preventative measures and support for homeless people, and those most at risk as outlined in the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-2028. Through successful partnership working across the public and third sectors 84% of cases who sought help achieved a positive outcome of at least 6 months temporary accommodation compared to 56% nationally.
- **Mental Health Racial Inequalities**  
Synergi-Leeds, an evolving partnership between health, social care and third sector organisations has been awarded Mental Health Innovation of the Year by the Health Service Journal. The work is addressing ethnic inequalities in mental health through co-produced 'Creative Space Events', amplifying the voices of those with lived experience, combatting prejudice and driving action.
- **Welcoming Spaces**  
Responding to increasing fuel poverty amplified by the cost-of-living crisis, Leeds City Council teamed with third sector and faith-based partners to create the Warm Space Initiative. Having been visited over 12,000 times in 2022, the initiative has developed in 2023, to take a holistic approach offering food and an opportunity for social connections.