



Appendix One

Update on Thriving: The Child Poverty Strategy for Leeds

1. Main issues

This report provides an update on the Leeds Child Poverty Strategy and progress of the workstreams that sit underneath the strategy. It also details our responses to the post pandemic and cost of living crisis, in terms of ongoing work, impact and next steps.

A full and comprehensive “Cost of Living Update report”¹ on the cost-of-living crisis and actions being undertaken by the Council and partners from a welfare and financial inclusion perspective was presented by the Director of Communities, Housing and Environment to Executive Board in April 2024.

Child Poverty Statistics ²

The 2022/23 national and local statistics were published in March 2024. These should be viewed as an estimate for the number of children living in poverty in Leeds and the UK.³ It is important to note that due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the HBAI survey data, caution is advised in making recent year-on-year comparisons to data published in 2022 and 2023. This is due to the smaller sample sizes and differing collection methods carried out for surveys during the lockdown period.

The national picture ⁴

In the UK 22% of dependent children under 20 are living in poverty (relative poverty **before housing costs** (BHC), up from 20% in 2021/22

In the UK 30% of dependent children under 20 are living in poverty (relative poverty **after housing costs** (AHC) – this is 4.33 million children, up from 29% in 2021/22.

- 34% of children under 20 living in families where someone has a disability are in Poverty (Relative AHC)
- 44% of children under 20 in lone parent families in the UK live in Poverty (Relative AHC)
- 47% of children under 20 in Asian and British Asian families live in poverty (Relative AHC)
- 51% of children under 20 in Black / Caribbean and Black British families live in Poverty (Relative AHC)

A higher number and percentage of all dependent children under 20 in poverty in the UK are from households where at least one adult is in work (2.99m out of 4.33m children equating to 69% AHC)

The local picture ⁵

In Leeds, 33,482 children under 16 were living in relative poverty **before housing costs** (BHC), equal to 22% in 2022/23. This is compared to a national figure of 20% (3.25m).

Recent research published by the End Child Poverty Coalition⁶ found that Leeds had 53,911 dependent children under 20 living in relative poverty, **after housing costs**, representing 30% of children in 2022/23.

21% of Leeds’ population is living in relative poverty after housing costs are deducted from income. This equates to approximately 176,376 people

¹ [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Executive Board, 17/04/2024 13:00 \(leeds.gov.uk\) ITEM 7](#)

² Please note that national data provides Child Poverty levels for dependent children under 20 both before and after housing costs. Official Child Poverty Rates for local areas are only available for children under 16, and only available on the BHC measure.

³ Definitions of poverty can be found in the Poverty Fact book - [Leeds Observatory – Leeds Poverty Fact Book](#)

⁴ [Households below average income \(HBAI\) statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

⁵ [Children in low income families: local area statistics, financial year ending 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

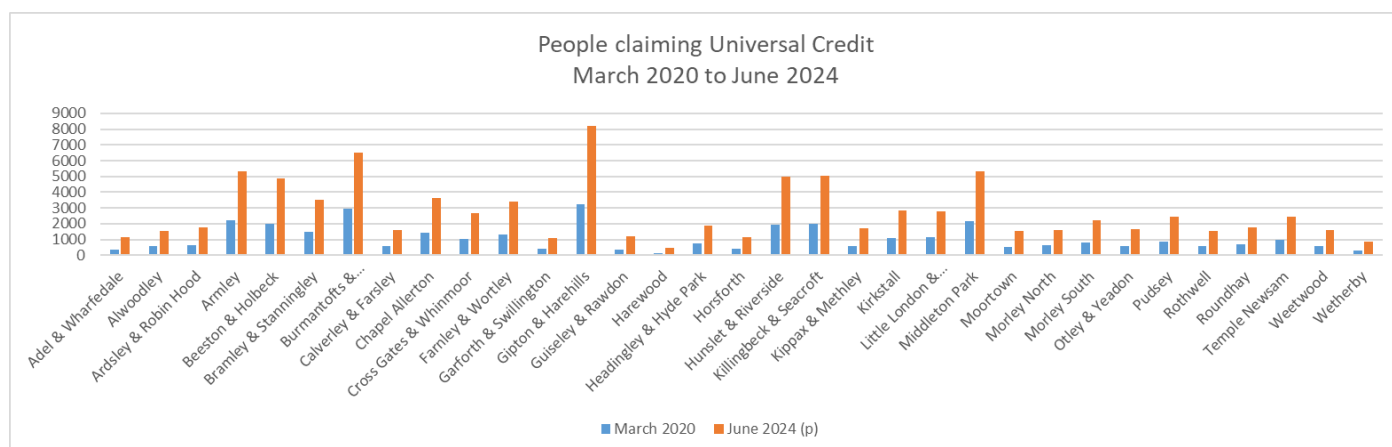
⁶ [Child Poverty Statistics 2024 - End Child Poverty](#)

Universal Credit

In March 2020, 35,450 were claiming Universal Credit in Leeds, this increased to a high of 74,515 people in March 2021. The latest provisional data shows that in **June 2024**, that figure has increased to 90,295 claimants, that remains more than double the pre-pandemic level.

All wards in Leeds have seen an increase in people claiming UC (Not in Employment), with the highest impact on our poorest wards. The most affected wards are Gipton and Harehills, where claimants have increased from 10.6% of Working Age Population (WAP), 2,209 claimants in March 2020 to 25.7% of WAP, 5,339 in May 2024, and Burmantofts and Richmond Hill ward where claimants have increased from 11.0% of the WAP, 2,072 claimants in March 2020 to 22.1% of the WAP, 4,166 claimants in May 2024.

Below details the information by ward across for UC all claimants.



1.1 The impact of poverty on children and families

Poverty has a profound effect on families and children living in them. Children who experience poverty are more likely to face a wide range of difficulties, both now and in the future. There are strong links between experiencing poverty as a child and having worse mental and physical health, a shorter life, lower grades in education, poor financial health and lower paid, insecure work.

Poverty is most often defined by income. But for most children, poverty is about more than just money. It is about growing up in a home without enough heat or nutritious food. Poverty means no new clothes, no telephone and no money for a birthday celebration. These deprivations have consequences that can last a lifetime. Research shows that children in poor families are less likely to complete a good education.⁷

The cost-of-living crisis is having a severe impact on families with children. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the war in Ukraine, Brexit and austerity and inflation has all increased pressures on low-income households and the most vulnerable in society, as well as pushing many additional households to experience financial uncertainty and hardship for the first time.

A report published in September 2023 based on an Education Anti-Poverty survey of 1,023 professionals working in schools in England, organised by the Child Poverty Action Group⁸ revealed:

- 79 % of school staff have to divert time from their allocated roles to combat child poverty, for example dealing with dinner money debt, sourcing food bank vouchers, hardship grants and home equipment like washing machines in families.
- Over half of teachers report an increase in the number of pupils struggling to concentrate on learning due to hunger and fatigue, compared to two years ago.
- 68% say more pupils don't have money for enough food at lunchtime.

⁷ [Child Poverty in the Midst of Wealth | UNICEF Office of Global Insight & Policy](#)

⁸ ['There is only so much we can do' - school staff in England | CPAG](#)

- 74% say there's evidence that children growing up in poverty have fallen further behind their peers with their learning.
- 70 % of headteachers say more parents are asking for help with essentials like food and clothing.

New data was released in December 2023 which revealed the North /South divide of children hit by the 2-child limit on benefits.⁹

- Yorkshire and Humber among regions with the highest percentage of households hit by the two-child limit.
- 13% of children in Yorkshire and Humber impacted.
- 12 of the 20 UK local authority areas with the highest percentage of affected families are in the North of England.

A report in September 2023 by Barnardo's found an estimated 894,000 children (11%) are without a proper bed, impacting on their wellbeing and education¹⁰. A report published in April 2023¹¹ about overcrowding in homes by revealed that households from ethnic minorities backgrounds were 3 times more likely to be affected by overcrowding than white households. Zarach¹² now is a member of the Child Poverty Board in Leeds to support this work.

In October 2023 October Joseph Rowntree Foundation reported¹³ that approximately 3.8 million people experienced destitution in 2022, including around one million children.

- The number of children facing destitution since 2019 has almost doubled and is nearly triple the number in 2017.
- Lone parents with children were around twice as likely to experience destitution compared with their share in the UK population (11% versus 5%).

To its extreme, poverty impacts on the mortality rate amongst children and infants. The National Child Mortality Database for November 2023¹⁴ shows that deaths were highest for children of black or black British ethnicity and those living in the poorest areas. The National Child Mortality Database includes data from reviews of all children who die at any time after birth and before their 18th birthday. The database started in 2019.

- the death rates in the poorest areas were more than twice as high as in the richest.
- for infants under one year of age, the death rate for the poorest went up from 5.4 per 1,000 infant population in 2022 to 5.9 in 2023.

The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health president, Dr Camilla Kingdon, said: "*Figures such as these in a nation as rich as ours are unforgivable. Reducing child poverty must finally become a national priority...This has to be a wake-up call for us all and I urge our political leaders to action.*"

Research published in June 2022¹⁵ suggests 10,356 more children living in English local authority areas became looked after than would have been the case had poverty levels remained at 2015 levels. The research team's modelling showed that within English local authorities, between 2015 and 2020, a 1% increase in child poverty was associated with an additional five children entering care per 100,000 population.

Using the IMD (index of multiple deprivation) data from 2023 there is a very pronounced pattern of diminishing chance of care from those from less deprived areas which is more exaggerated than in 2021 or 2022. Some analysis of this is detailed below.

- In 2023, children in the most deprived 1% of Leeds were 5.5 times more likely to enter care than the least deprived 80%
- In 2023, children in the most deprived 10% of Leeds were 9 times more likely to enter care than the least deprived 10%.
- 70% of children looked after are from the 20% most deprived areas in the city; with 20% increase in the number of children looked after in 2023 from the 20% most deprived areas in Leeds.

⁹ [New data reveals North/South divide of children hit by two-child limit on benefits - End Child Poverty](#)

¹⁰ [No crib for a bed: the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on bed poverty | Barnardo's \(barnardos.org.uk\)](#)

¹¹ [National Housing Federation - Overcrowding in England](#)

¹² [We deliver beds and basics to children in poverty. \(zarach.org\)](#)

¹³ [Destitution in the UK 2023 | Joseph Rowntree Foundation \(jrf.org.uk\)](#)

¹⁴ [Child death data release 2023 | National Child Mortality Database \(ncmd.info\)](#)

¹⁵ [Child Poverty & children entering care](#), The Lancet, June 2022

2. The Leeds Approach

We know that the feeling of being in poverty, the feeling of being excluded and the feeling of being ashamed can impact a child for the rest of their life. We don't want this in Leeds. So, we are working together, as a city, to reduce the impact of poverty on young people. This is our moral imperative.

Thriving: The Child Poverty Strategy for Leeds was launched in 2019. The strategy was refreshed in late 2023 with consultation with over 20 groups of Children and Young people in Leeds. As a result, the names and aims of each of the 7 workstreams have been refreshed to reflect new emerging and existing priorities as well as addressing the feedback and voices expressed. This includes addressing the stigma of poverty, improving access to food and other basic needs and increasing our communication around available services. This strategy will be launched in the Autumn 2024 and future governance meetings and will report on this.

Our Ambitions

- We will be innovative, together, to break down the barriers that poverty creates.
- We will be brave, together, to revolutionise the way that Leeds works with children, young people and families who live in poverty.
- We will fight, together, to ensure that every child and young person who experiences poverty can thrive.
- We will work together to tackle inequality across services and organisations, to find meaningful solutions for those experiencing poverty.

2.0 Main issues

This section provides an update on each impact workstream, the projects that sit within the impact workstreams and details actions, impact and next steps.

3.0 Financial Health & Inclusion

The aim of this workstream is: ***We want every family to be equipped with the support, guidance and opportunities needed to live financially secure lives.***

This workstream is led by Lee Hemsworth, Chief Officer Customer Access and Welfare Communities and Environments.

The main projects are: Financial health and inclusion support directly to families; Increasing engagement in wider support and guidance to families to support financial health and inclusion; and Ensuring knowledge and understanding of financial health and inclusion issues and support.

3.1 Priority 1: Increasing engagement in financial health and inclusion support directly to families.

Update on recent activities.

The key areas of activity for priority 1 are the Healthy Holidays programme, Household Support Fund, and Free School Meal uptake.

Healthy Holidays

Healthy Holidays is a Department for Education funded scheme that delivers provision for children eligible for Free School Meals over the Easter, Summer and Christmas holidays. The core of the programme is engaging children and young people with enriching, fun activities and a healthy hot meal, however the benefits of the programme are far reaching and long lasting. The multiplicity and varied nature of the programme within Leeds is a key strength.

The Leeds 2023 programme reached 22,000 children and young people through a wide range of schools, third sector organisations (managed by Leeds Community Foundation) and council provisions through Community Hubs and Breeze.

The programme is now in its final year of confirmed funding from the DfE. Leeds City Council has received £3.4 million for 2024, and has commissioned schools, third sector organisations and council provisions across Leeds to provide healthy food and enriching activities to children eligible for Free School Meals. The Easter programme has been successfully delivered and evaluation is now underway, alongside planning for the summer programme.

Additional support for the programme is provided by a range of Council and external providers enhancing the local offer and including food support from Catering Leeds, FareShare, Rethink food, Hamara and Give a Gift; Active Leeds swimming catch up programme; Parks & Countryside's trips and visits to Leeds City Council Activity Centres.

Household Support Fund

The Department for Work and Pension's Household Support Fund (HSF) is a short-term, national funding stream delivered by local authorities in England to support those most in need, principally with the costs of food fuel and essential items. The fourth round of the Household Support Fund was delivered over the 12-month period April 2023 to March 2024. This was the first time the fund's delivery period had extended over 12 months. Unfortunately, the recently announced extension of the Household Support Fund into round 5 has reverted to a six-month distribution period. Leeds City Council received £14.2m to allocate between 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 and will receive just under £7.1m for HSF5 to be delivered between 1st April 2024 and 30th September 2024.

In Leeds, the agreed approach has continued to be a mix of direct provision, application-based support and support offered through third sector organisations and council services already working to help households most impacted by the Cost-of-Living crisis. We are currently working on the Delivery Plan for HSF5.

Free School Meals

See data below.

Outcomes and outputs:

Healthy Holidays

The Healthy Holidays Programme in Leeds has a significant, beneficial impact upon the children and young people participating. Providers, especially schools, report ongoing and improved engagement from children and young people who have accessed the Healthy Holidays Programme; better transitions between primary and secondary education settings and reassurance in seeing children throughout Easter, summer and Christmas holidays from a safeguarding perspective.

Over three holiday periods in 2023, the programme reached 22,000 children and young people and served over 270,000 portions of food. Providers took up the offer of catch-up swimming through Active Leeds – 650 children attended 5 days of lessons at one of thirteen sites in the city. The strength of the programme can be seen through the wider wellbeing outcomes for the children, carers and providers. These outcomes include improved relationships, confidence, friendships, emotional and social support, keeping children safe from harm, and alleviates pressure on parents in key holiday periods.

The Easter Programme 2024 went well despite challenges due to the late release of DfE guidance and funding and the wet weather. Over 4,850 children attended, of which 87% were eligible for benefits-related Free School Meals

For the Summer programme, Healthy Holidays are running through 39 school provisions, 42 third sector organisations, 4 Breeze camps and 4 Community Hub & Library provisions. The Department for Education have introduced a requirement for the eligibility of all children to be checked, and so a Healthy Holidays Booking System has been introduced. Due to timescales, the team and providers faced a significant challenge around implementation - however the system is established.

“9 years old, he lives with his mum & stepfather has an older sister in high school & younger sister in nursery. His mum & stepfather have just had a baby. He has a good relationship with his dad but doesn't see him much, he is volatile & very aggressive. Despite his age he frequently plays out in the estate, involved in petty crime & anti-social behaviour such as fire setting & criminal damage. He is known by the anti-social behaviour team. His family are at threat of eviction. Mum struggles with mental ill-health & finds it hard to put boundaries in place. Mum did not apply for holiday clubs but then sent a text asking for help. He attended many, absolutely thriving & was amazing. He engaged in activities & was allowed to be a relaxed little boy, winning awards & engaged. It was a joy to see him so relaxed & happy. Staff enjoyed spending time with him. In our community he is at risk of criminal exploitation but in holiday clubs he was a relaxed little boy who was safe, well fed & happy”.

“It is an amazing opportunity to be able to provide our families with such wonderful holiday clubs. We can safeguard and target families and know that they are physically active, not socially isolated and fed. Having sight and interaction with the most vulnerable pupils and members of society, knowing they are safe, warm, fed in a safe environment with such impacting opportunities is a sound framework that we would love to continue to build on. It is a huge thanks to HAF for allowing us to provide such a lasting legacy”.

Household Support Fund

Leeds received £14.2 million for use between 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024. The funding was distributed according to our Delivery Plan for 2023/24 and included:

- Approximately £5.4m in direct cash awards to households in receipt of Council Tax Support who are on the lowest incomes in the city (this included 16,937 households with children and an estimated 33,200 individual children). In addition, payments were made to households solely claiming Housing Benefit who missed out on DWP Cost of Living payments during 2023/24.
- Increased funding was made available for the Local Welfare Support Scheme, our application-based scheme supporting people in crisis, and additional payments also made to people applying for Discretionary Housing Payments and demonstrating exceptional hardship. Almost £2m was allocated to these areas of support.
- Winter support initiatives amounting to £234k were delivered including funding for Public Health winter warmth priority projects and the welcome spaces network.
- Housing costs in exceptional circumstances for Housing Leeds tenants and distributed through Housing Leeds. Support was also provided for homeless households and those threatened with homelessness administered by Leeds Housing Options. £700k in total was allocated for these initiatives.
- £500k was allocated to Children and Families'. Support was offered through a range of projects including 0-5's in low-income households, care leavers, Roma families, section 17 and foster carers.
- Third sector - £3.4m was allocated as follows:
 - Voluntary Action Leeds to support the Leeds Community Anchor Network.
 - The Leeds Food Aid Network to support a wide range of food aid providers including the City's Cultural Food Hubs and charities such as Zarach and Leeds Baby Bank.
 - Forum Central to support health and social care charities and grassroot organisations providing direct assistance to households in need.
 - Advice agencies to provide practical help to clients actively engaging with advice.

For the year 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024, £13,386,794 was spent in direct support of 187,196 households, over 44% of which included children. This spend was delivered through awards linked to receipt of Council Tax Support, the Local Welfare Support Scheme, additional payments to people applying for Discretionary Housing Payments and through direct targeted support delivered by third sector partners. During Q3, 16,925 vouchers with a value of £100 were issued to households with children and in receipt of Council Tax Support. The redemption rate for this cohort of recipients stands at over 95% as at 31/3/24.

Free School Meals

Free school meals (FSM) in Leeds are administered by the Council Tax and Benefits Service and schools are supported by the Health and Wellbeing Services. Information on free school meals take-up is recorded annually by data provided by schools as part of the January census. In January 2024, School Census data for

England reveals 2.1 million children - 24.6% of all pupils were eligible and claiming a free school meal nationally. In Leeds, 34,956 (26.5%) of pupils in Leeds were eligible and claiming a free school meal. This figure is up by 787 pupils (2.3%) from 2023 when 34,169 pupils were eligible and claiming. (These figures exclude all infant children on universal free school meals regardless of income).

Of the children eligible, take up rates have fallen from 78.2% in 2023 to 75.9% in 2024. This equates to 8,435 pupils not taking up their free school meal on the day of the School Census. Transitional protection was introduced in April 2021 and is currently set to be in place until the end of the roll out of Universal Credit in March 2025. This may be impacting on FSM take up as there could be an increasing number of pupils eligible and registered whose families may not need the support and would have previously become ineligible prior to transitional protection.

The Health and Wellbeing Services, in partnership with the Council Tax and Benefits Service, also provides training twice per year to support schools with maximising the number of children who take up free school meals that they are entitled too. This course took place in January 2024 and in May 2024 and was attended by 18 schools. [Free school meals and tackling poverty in schools | Leeds for Learning](#)

The Health and Wellbeing Services and the Council Tax and Benefits Service are currently engaged with a research study with The University of York who are looking at 'autoenrollment' schemes across the country. Leeds has been administering free school meals with a combined application process with Council Tax Support, whereby free school meals are automatically awarded, unless a family proactively opts out.

The Health and Wellbeing Services, in partnership with Leeds University and Sheffield University, are delivering a breakfast in schools survey with schools, which was launched in May 2024. The survey aims to map current provision, identify gaps and encourage more schools to provide a nutritious breakfast as part of their offer. Providing breakfast in schools can help to remove hunger as a barrier to learning. The project will also aim to identify schools who may be eligible for free or subsidised breakfast offers and ensure they are maximising available funding.

Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM) are provided at no cost to all pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 and are not means tested. For UIFSM each meal taken by an eligible pupil attracts £2.53 per day, providing £480.70 per eligible pupil. Meals for pupils in these year groups who are entitled to means tested FSM are funded separately. Take up of UIFSM in the January 2024 census showed a consistent take up at 90.1%.

Pupil premium funding is made available to schools based on numbers of disadvantaged pupils in different categories, which includes pupils recorded as eligible for free school meals (FSM) or those that have been recorded as eligible in the past 6 years (FSM Ever 6). This includes eligible children of families who have no recourse to public funds (NRPF). For the financial year 2023-24, the total number of pupils eligible for the deprivation pupil premium was 33,798. Schools will receive £1,455 per eligible primary pupil and £1,035 per eligible secondary pupil. Full details and the conditions of the grant are available at [Pupil premium 2023-24: technical note - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

Next steps:

Healthy Holidays

The booking system implementation will continue, with parents/ carers encouraged to sign up. The summer programme will be evaluated, and the Christmas programme is in the process of being planned. Current funding for the programme is due to end after Christmas, and there is currently no indication if there will be any Healthy Holidays funding in the future. Information regarding this should be provided in autumn statement at the end of October 2024.

Household Support Fund

The focus is currently on the construction of the Delivery Plan for HSF5 which also needs to be submitted and agreed by the DWP. The work will then move to the distribution of funding to ensure it reaches those most in need over the delivery period up to 30th September 2024. For clarification / information regarding HSF future funding is expected September 2024.

Free School Meals

The Health and Wellbeing Services and the Council Tax and Benefits Service are currently engaged with a research study with The University of York who are looking at 'autoenrollment' schemes across the country. Leeds has been administering free school meals with a combined application process with Council Tax Support, whereby free school meals are automatically awarded, unless a family proactively opts out.

The Health and Wellbeing Services, in partnership with Leeds University and Sheffield University, are launching a school breakfast survey in May 2024. The survey aims to map current provision, identify gaps and encourage more schools to provide a nutritious breakfast as part of their offer. Providing breakfast in schools can help to remove hunger as a barrier to learning. The project will also aim to identify schools who may be eligible for free or subsidised breakfast offers and ensure they are maximising available funding.

3.2 Priority 2: Increasing engagement in wider support and guidance to families to support financial health and inclusion.

Update on recent activities.

In terms of engagement in wider support and guidance, the current focus is on the Uniform Re-use scheme and gambling-related harm work.

Leeds School Uniform Exchange (LSUE)

Funded by Leeds City Council (Financial Inclusion Team), Zero Waste Leeds (ZWL) co-ordinate the city's school uniform reuse scheme, aiming to reduce the number of uniforms sent to waste, reduce the stigma of wearing second hand clothing and tackling poverty through encouraging more families to reuse and donate rather than to feel pressured to buy new uniform every term.

Uniform exchange promotional events supported by ZWL take place across the city, during half term and seasonal periods, complimented by various regular weekly exchanges, alongside community groups and support services such as food pantries.

In addition to uniform activities, ZWL also coordinate the Winter Coat Campaign which facilitates the donation and distribution of free coats and winter clothing to those most in need, alongside wider support in Welcome Spaces and Community Hubs/Libraries.

Gambling Related Harm

Gambling-related harm continues to be a key priority for Leeds City Council through a strong partnership approach, led by Financial Inclusion and working with Public Health, Licensing and wider Council services, treatment services and external partners.

The Leeds Gambling Harms Group is a citywide partnership bringing together services to collectively address gambling-related harm in the city. The group have identified 'protecting children and young people from gambling-related harm' as a key priority for the group. This continues to be part of the forward work programme and currently focusses on:

- The annual analysis of the gambling questions within the My Health, My School Survey.
- The commissioning of a train the trainer for secondary school staff in partnership with Sheffield-based charity Gambling with Lives.
- The communication of key messages regarding prevention and support via key websites.

In addition to the above work, work continues to support adults within the wider gambling harms work programme. Children can be impacted by the gambling of a parent, carer or adult in their life and this wider

programme could therefore indirectly reduce further harms they could otherwise experience as a result of this.

The annual 'My Health, My School Survey' included questions on gambling for the fifth year running. Revised gambling questions were included in the 2022-2023 survey, taking into account feedback from clinical experts and young people. These questions are currently being analysed and a Power BI dashboard has been developed to present the data in a more engaging and dynamic way. This has allowed the Financial Inclusion Team to undertake more detailed analysis of last year's responses and has demonstrated some concerning new findings around a correlation between children and young people that gamble and self-harm and suicide. Once the analysis has been completed, the data dashboard and an associated report will be distributed.

A survey carried out with staff in Secondary and Further Education settings found that there is a need for further training and support with gambling harm resources. In response to this, a training and resource package was developed in partnership with the charity Gambling with Lives and was piloted in Leeds in February 2023. 100% of attendees rated the session as excellent. Following the success of this training package, Leeds Public Health are commissioning a further session to support staff from primary schools, secondary schools and colleges, with a focus on those with a pastoral support role. This forms part of a wider regional pilot to develop a training offer around children and young people's gambling, without industry funding or influence.

Work has recently been underway to review websites and gambling support information for children, young people, parents and guardians in Leeds, including MindMate, Leeds Money Information Centre – Gambling Harms page and Leeds Safeguarding Children's Partnership websites. Updated information has incorporated any emerging gambling trends amongst young people.

Leeds City Council continues to roll out Harmful Gambling Guidance for all staff. This guidance aims to support staff experiencing gambling related harms, whether it is caused by their own gambling or that of a loved one. In order to promote this guidance further and encourage other employers in Leeds to adopt a version of their own to support staff who may be experiencing gambling harms or are in recovery from, the Financial Inclusion Team will be part of a panel discussing 'How to be a recovery friendly employer providing flexible, effective and sustainable workplace support' at the upcoming Leeds Mindful Employer conference on 21st May.

Outcomes and outputs:

Leeds School Uniform Exchange Quarterly Update (March 2024)

81% of schools covered by a uniform exchange.

93 schools not currently covered – 29 in most deprived areas of Leeds according to IMD.

Number of Community Schemes: 19

Number of weekly pop-up shops: 12

New additions to the LSUE website: 6 schools/schemes since October 2023

Uniform Rails at 5 Community Hubs including Kippax, Burmantofts, Seacroft, Compton Centre & Holt Park

Recent Pop-up shops held during the February half term holidays results:

Kentmere Community Centre: 140 items

Meanwood Community Centre: 104 items

Nowell Mount Community Centre: 503 items

Reduce, Reuse Kids Clothes (Pudsey): 92 items.

Leeds Winter Coat Appeal (16 October 2023 – 29 February 2024)

The appeal hosted 49 donation points including leisure centres, community hubs, businesses, health centres, community groups and schools/universities and 32 public distribution points including Community Hubs and community groups (including Welcome Spaces).

Total amount of winter items collected: 7,633 (increase from 2022/23 total of 6,500 items)

Cost Saving: Total £144,586.43

Textile Waste Saving: 5,182.02kg

CO2 Emission Saving: 111,413.43kg

1149 winter items were distributed via local charities including to Leeds Baby Bank and Zarach.

Gambling Related Harm

In the 2021/2022 My Health, My School Survey analysis showed that 1988 secondary school pupils completed the gambling questions within the survey. Of those, 24% reported they had gambled, 0.6% reported gambling as a cause of concern or worry (an increase of 0.2%) and 49% reported they need better information on learning material in school on gambling. The 2022/2023 responses are currently being analysed and a Power BI dashboard will be available imminently.

Next steps

Leeds School Uniform Exchange

Funding has been secured for both LSUE and the winter coat appeal for another year in March 2024, with quarterly meetings with Zero Waste Leeds, LCC Financial Inclusion Team and representation from Children & Families in place. The school uniform exchange continues to focus on increasing the overall coverage of schools in Leeds, particularly concentrating on schools in areas of high deprivation.

Gambling Related harm

The findings of 2022/2023 My Health, My School gambling question responses will be analysed and will inform the children and young people's gambling work stream.

Financial Inclusion and Public Health will continue to work with the LCC Health & Wellbeing Service/Healthy Schools Team to improve the gambling questions within the My Health My School survey to ensure the latest trends amongst young people are incorporated where possible.

Financial Inclusion will with other anchor organisations in the city to implement their own Harmful Gambling Guidance to support employees. This will be through participation in the upcoming Leeds Mindful Employer Conference in May.

Financial Inclusion and Public Health will continue to deliver work on children and young people's gambling within the work programme of the Leeds Gambling Harms Group.

3.3 Priority 3: Ensuring knowledge and understanding of financial health and inclusion issues and support.

Update on recent activities.

Resources and Training

A Google drive containing key resources, and messages across services and organisations continues to be maintained.

A suite of online and printed resources is maintained, distributed and refreshed by the Financial Inclusion Team to assist families and frontline workers in accessing quality assured, free, confidential and impartial help and advice on a range of money related matters such as debt, energy, food and utilities. Resources are available online and in printed formats with translated materials available. Printed resources are available from a variety of locations and services across Leeds including advice and support organisations, third sector, housing, community hubs and libraries, health and via other council services such as gas and electric teams, public health and children's services.

The Financial Inclusion Team continues to deliver briefings, training and awareness raising sessions focussed on financial inclusion subjects including tackling poverty and financial inclusion, cost of living, fuel

poverty support and training, signposting and Welcome Spaces. Sessions are delivered in collaboration with relevant partners organisations and experts and are promoted and attended by a range of council and partner services including those working directly with families with children.

Cost of Living Response

In September 2022 Leeds City Council set up a citywide approach to mitigate the impact of the cost-of-living crisis. Building on a long established and effective approach to tackling poverty and addressing financial inclusion in the city, strategic and operational partnership groups were established, focusing on ensuring awareness and understanding of support available, practical support, and ensuring short-term funding available is coordinated and maximised. In addition, theme-based discussions also took place to ensure deeper understanding and collective responses to issues such as Housing, Child Poverty, Crime and Community Safety, Migration, Third sector support, Health and Social Care.

Outcomes and outputs:

Resources and Training

Since the last update provided in which we had distributed over 85,000 resources after launching a new suite of materials, the Financial Inclusion Team have distributed a further 13,000 in the last six months on a request-by-request basis.

The Leeds MIC website www.leedsmic.org.uk, includes links to local and national advice services and also includes a link to the Leeds MIC Map showing where to access advice services across Leeds.

Physical resources available including flyers (including translations), concertinas, posters and business cards. Over 40,000 printed resources have been distributed to organisations including council services, NHS and health settings, DWP, third sector and universities since January 2023.

In addition, the comprehensive Managing Your Money printed booklet has been updated and redesigned, with 20,000 copies distributed to Community Hubs and Libraries, Housing Teams and a range of external financial inclusion partners from October 2023.

Financial Inclusion Team have delivered training and awareness sessions to a wide range of council (including elected members) and health services in the last quarter including:

- Adult Social Care- Age Friendly Board, Equalities Hub for older people, Age Friendly Partnership
- Childrens Services: Child Poverty Impact Board
- Elected members: bespoke member training sessions around financial inclusion and gambling related harms (x2).
- Third Sector: Welcome Spaces groups, Religion or Belief Hub

In the last quarter, the Financial Inclusion Team have delivered training to 126 people.

Cost of living Response

Full details of the activities undertaken, and the impact made were reported at Executive Board in April 2024¹⁶ and Scrutiny in December 2023¹⁷.

Next steps

Resources and Training

The Financial Inclusion Team will continue to update resources, as required, and distribute to frontline services, monitoring any distribution to understand reach. The google drive continues to be maintained and shared on a regular basis.

¹⁶ [Cost of Living Update Report – Executive Board 17th April 2024](#)

¹⁷ [Reducing Poverty Improving Financial Inclusion DEC 2023 FINAL.pdf \(leeds.gov.uk\)](#)

Continue establishing a clear and concise narrative using poverty statistics, data and local evidence, maintaining resources such as the Leeds Poverty Fact Book.

Members of the Financial Inclusion Team are liaising with partners and cross council services to ensure training and awareness sessions with respect to specific areas of concern/emerging issues within the context of the cost of living are available to frontline services including Children & Families.

The Financial Inclusion team and representatives from Children and Families are also working together to increase awareness and partnership working with respect to food aid provisions in the city.

4.0 Best Start for Health & Wellbeing

The aim of this workstream is: ***We want every baby in Leeds from conception to age two to have the best start in life, with a focus on families living in the most deprived areas to ensure equitable outcomes for all.*** This workstream is led by Kathryn Ingold, the Chief Officer - Public Health.

4.1 Priority 1: Breastfeeding – uptake and maintenance

Update on recent activities.

The Leeds Breastfeeding Plan is the overarching strategic document driven by the Breastfeeding Plan Partnership to increase the number of babies who are breastfed and give them the best start in life with a particular focus on the number of babies receiving breastmilk at birth and at 6-8 weeks. Breastfeeding is budget friendly and provides food security for the infant in the first six months of life and thereafter alongside other foods.

The Leeds Breastfeeding Peer Support ‘Bosom Buddies’ contract has been extended to 31st March 2027. Additional funding has been secured to ensure continuation and development of the Breast Pump loan scheme and to enable continued increased activity previously funded by Leeds Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).

Increasing the knowledge and confidence of practitioners to support women and families with feeding. Health Visiting, Midwifery, Neonatal service maintained UNICEF Breastfeeding Friendly Initiative (BFI) accreditation status.

The 2-day breastfeeding and relationship building training package has been revised (Dec 23) to ensure the evidence base remains current and it is in line with BFI standards.

Work has commenced on reviewing the policies and guidelines from Leeds Teaching Hospital Trust (LTHT), Leeds Community Healthcare (LCH) and Leeds City Council (LCC), for pregnant people and new parents returning to work breastfeeding. The aim is to ensure best practice across these organisations to ensure that breastfeeding is promoted, supported and protected.

Outcomes and outputs:

The Leeds breastfeeding initiation rate in Q3 2023/24 is 74.7% up slightly on the 2022/23 rate of 73.3%. However, the rate for deprived Leeds remains significantly lower at 65.5%. Breastfeeding maintenance (at 8 weeks) Q3 rate is 48.6% compared to 46% in 2022/23, the Q3 rate for deprived Leeds is 43.1%

‘Bosom Buddies’ peer groups are run by trained breastfeeding peer supporters who are mothers that breastfed. There are now around 70 active peer supporters in Leeds in groups and on postnatal wards. There are currently 11 peer support groups across the city in Pudsey, Little London, Middleton, Gipton, Burley, Crossgates, Castleton, Chapteltown, Guiseley, Otley and Garforth. A total of 414 group sessions were delivered last year with 1055 families attending.

150 breast-pumps allocated as part of the loan scheme. 97% of parents rate the scheme excellent, with the other 3% rating us as very good. "Very easy to access. Amazing service. The pump was brought to me in hospital on the same day I emailed Bosom Buddies."

Children's Centres have undergone the UNICEF assessment visit for Stages 2 and 3 of the BFI accreditation. Final audits completed in May 2024 and awarded full accreditation in June.

Preparation for Birth and Beyond (PBB) (antenatal parenting programme) continues to be delivered universally, city wide at Childrens Centres. This is delivered in partnership by 0-19 Public Health Integrated Nursing Service (PHINS), Childrens Centres and maternity service. Currently 7 groups run per month with a mix of virtual and face to face with varying number of attendees (pregnant women and partner/supporter). In Qr4 12 face to face groups ran with 98 pregnant people attending most with a partner/supporter, and 9 virtual groups ran with 96 pregnant people attending most with a partner/supporter. Baby Buddy App is promoted at all PBB sessions, in March 287 people in Leeds downloaded the App, the top area for downloads was Hunslet and Riverside.

Next steps

- Continue to recruit and train new peer support volunteers for community groups and on postnatal wards. Improve communications to young parents via social media posts and the design of a leaflet for midwifery. Establish a young mums group.
- Continue to promote and develop the Leeds is Breastfeeding Friendly scheme.
- To look at the Breastfeeding Plan priority actions through a poverty lens to understand current links and use them to focus and facilitate opportunities.
- To use the breastfeeding dashboard data to drive work in areas where inequalities continue to widen.
- To continue to evaluate parents experience of PBB and facilitate sessions according to need. Continued promotion of Baby Buddy app

4.2 Priority 2: Early Communication skills – PEEP Programme

Update on recent activities.

Since 2022 a programme of practitioner training by Parents as Early Education Partners (PEEP) [Learning Together Programme](#) (LTP) has upskilled a range of practitioners to run PEEP sessions for preschool children and their families in children's centres and other settings across Leeds. To date there are 77 practitioners across Leeds (Children's Centre Teams, Library staff and 3rd sector) who have attended this training.

LTP helps parents, carers and practitioners make the most of everyday learning opportunities, supporting their babies' and young children's learning through communication and play and extends what parents/carers already do to support their child's learning in everyday life. Peep is a strengths-based approach to working with families, focusing on doing *with* rather than doing *to* and has been successfully run in settings such as playgroups and children's centres (as part of existing groups/activities or stand alone, in groups or 1-2-1 work (evaluated in 2022 by NESTA). PEEP sessions can involve:

- talk time, to discuss key ideas with parents and carers relating to the topic focus.
- songs and rhymes
- books and stories
- way for families to put ORIM into action (Opportunities, Recognition, Interaction, Modelling)
- play activities (during the session and/or ideas to try at home).

By offering support to families in this way it provides the opportunity to target support for families and provide key information on how they can support their children by communicating in an informal way as

well as giving the opportunity for families to share stories and gain peer support which is identified as being something families have said they value in a recent evaluation of Leeds Speech and Language Therapy Service conducted by Nesta.

Speech, language and communication pathway for practitioners supporting children and families in Leeds is in final draft and awaiting sign off.

Outcomes and outputs:

Leeds child development data for the percentage of children achieving the expected level in communication skills at 2 to 2 and a half years in 2022/23 was 89.6% this is similar to the regional figure of 89% and lower than the England rate of 95.9%. Trend data shows an improvement on the 2021/22 figure of 86.9% but is still below the pre-pandemic rate of 94% in 2019/20.

Leeds Early Years Impact Summary 2021/22 shows school readiness/good level of development at end of reception year (all areas) at lower than the national average (61% in Leeds compared to 65.2% national average) and this has dropped since 2018/9. There are large inequalities in child development between those living in the most and least deprived areas of Leeds, children growing up in Harehills (part of Gipton and Harehills Ward) have the poorest outcomes in terms of communication and language at age 5. Notably these are also the areas with the lowest take-up of early education age 2. This project, by targeting families in key areas and those accessing groups/activities who are not in nursery provision, helps to inform families of the rich learning that can take place in the home environment which will hopefully improve future school readiness data.

Colleagues at NESTA evaluated the PEEP project in 2022 which resulted in completed questionnaires from 24 of 26 PEEP trained practitioners (at that time) and interviews with 6 parents which showed positive results. All respondents who had attended the training found some, or all relevant to their work and all parents interviewed could identify specific changes in their behaviours as a result of the Peep sessions they had attended. The majority of these were focused on communication and language development.

“Normally, most of the time before I was looking at Facebook or Instagram in my daily life when giving them breakfast, lunch or dinner. But now I’m not doing that, I’m communicating more - and doing the things in the leaflets”. (parent)

(NESTA evaluation of PEEP in Leeds 2022)

Next steps

A project has recently started involving more practitioners to be trained in the Learning Together Programme with the potential for further training on the [Peep Progression Pathway](#). The Pathway training builds on the Learning Together Programme by enabling practitioners to support the learning of the parents/carers through a portfolio assessment and recognised accreditation by offering the opportunity to achieve nationally recognised units to cover three qualification levels for parents and carers as learners while supporting their children. At each of these levels, learners can follow a unit covering any of the five Peep learning strands - Communication and Language, Health and Physical Development, etc, and/or any of the four developmental stages - Babies, Toddlers, Pre-schoolers or Early Childhood - of the Learning Together Programme.

It is planned to also extend the offer of the LTP training for more practitioners in Leeds, including practitioners in Libraries and Speech and Language Therapy Services, for targeting those who have concerns about their child’s speech/language and/or those awaiting Speech Language Therapy services.

These workstreams offer a valuable and timely opportunity to build on previous training and upskill the practitioners working with families to enable them to learn about supporting their child in a range of areas around speech, language, communication and other key school readiness and themselves achieve accredited units which can be used for future qualifications and work opportunities.

Finalise the speech, language and communication pathway for practitioners.

4.3 Priority 3: Economic wellbeing 0-19 service

Update on recent activities.

The 0-19 Public Health Integrated Nursing Service (PHINS) has an economic wellbeing pathway linked to their internal intranet, making it accessible to all practitioners. The pathway describes how the 0-19 PHINS and Early Start practitioners will support families to achieve economic wellbeing. This includes support to families to:

1. Maximise income.
2. Manage debt.
3. Access support services
4. Reduce fuel bills.
5. Develop financial literacy.
6. Access education and work

The pathway includes links to a vast range of support that practitioners can signpost to including food banks and Healthy Holiday clubs. The service also ensures families are receiving all benefit entitlement including access to dental care and prescriptions during pregnancy. In addition, they ensure families are aware of the 2-year-old child place entitlement for those on specific benefits.

In Q2 commissioners requested an audit of three, 0-19 pathways as part of the quality assurance process. This included economic wellbeing, safe sleeping and domestic violence and abuse. See below for information.

Sarah Cooke, Clinical Change Lead for the 0-19 service attended the Child Poverty Board meeting in Oct 2023 to deliver a presentation on how the service support families around economic wellbeing.

Outcomes and outputs:

The 0-19 PHINS practitioners support families with social and economic needs through their mandated contacts with children and families. Needs are identified and reviewed with practitioner's enquiring about food availability, debt, benefit entitlement and employment. The service also ensures families receive all benefit entitlement including access to dental care and prescriptions during pregnancy. In addition, they ensure families are aware of the 2-year-old child place entitlement for those on specific benefits.

In Q3 the service had 80 ASDA vouchers to give out to support children and families in desperate need and suffering poverty. The numbers of families who struggle over Christmas is still high and economic wellbeing intervention featured in at least 10% of all contacts carried out.

The total no. of economic wellbeing interventions during this period was 2651, which is consistent with numbers from the previous quarter.

Next steps

The service and commissioners will continue to monitor economic wellbeing interventions each quarter and will continue to update the pathway with information on relevant support services.

The service is due to attend a meeting with Public Health Children & Families colleagues and other key partners to explore opportunities for welfare advice across maternity and early years.

5.0 Housing & Provision

The aim of this workstream is: ***We want to support every family and young person living in social housing in Leeds to achieve a sustainable tenancy.***

This workstream is led by Gerard Tinsdale, Chief Officer Housing, Resources and Housing.

Priority 1 - Joint Working Between Housing and Children's Social Work Teams to Support Families in Council Tenancies

Update on recent activities.

Partnership working continues with Children's Health and Disability (CHAD) with continued attendance at their Operations Group where we discuss inappropriate referrals and learning outcomes. Formal guidance has now been produced by a working group of CHAD and Housing staff this will shortly be issued to Contact Centre, Customer Service, and Housing staff to help them identify the correct route for enquiries relating to adaptations and reduce inappropriate referrals and unnecessary waiting times.

Housing staff attended West Yorkshire Trauma Informed Foundation Training promoting understanding of the barriers to engagement and awareness of how to appropriately respond to a person that has suffered trauma, improving confidence, communication, and insight about the approaches for engaging with and supporting families to achieve better outcomes.

Housing Officers and Housing Managers met with representatives from the Institute of Health Equity (IHE) who are leading on the Marmot City health programme for Leeds with the aims of, increasing everyone's opportunity to have all the right building blocks of good health and developing approaches for everyone but at a different scale or intensity depending on the needs of different communities. Housing has been identified as one of the priorities of the programme. Staff shared their experiences of inequality issues from a housing perspective, and their thoughts on the areas that the partnership could have most impact.

A dedicated Damp & Mould team was set up in the wake of the coroner's report on the death of Awaab Ishak in Rochdale which saw a ten-fold increase in damp and mould enquiries from tenants and visiting professionals. Significant time and resource have been dedicated to the refining the processes, data management, communications and staff knowledge and skills associated with damp, mould, and condensation. Actions have focused on compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Service's self-assessment, including the introduction of a Damp and Mould Policy and Damp and Mould Strategy, consistent with industry guidance and best practice. Training has now been delivered to all front-line staff within Housing Leeds. An e-learning package is in development to supplement this training and will be made available for all visiting staff across the organisation.

Outcomes and outputs:

Case study example - Family A - had stopped making rent payments for their home, they were refusing to engage with the local housing team despite 24 months' worth of visits, letters, and ongoing enforcement on their tenancy. Approach had been made to Children's Social work team over risks to the family's tenancy due to rising arrears and non-engagement. CSW visited but were unable to get the parents to engage with Housing or make the necessary payments, there were no concerns at the visit about the children's welfare. Support and enforcement options were exhausted, and case referred to court due to large arrears c.£6k. District judge granted a suspend possession and order the parents to pay their rent plus an additional amount to gradually reduce their arrears, they did not attend court and failed to pay as ordered by the court.

The courts subsequently issued a warrant for the family's eviction, Housing and CSW carried out a joint visit to deliver the eviction notice, advised the parents they could still stop the eviction if they attended court ask for a suspension and agree to engage make payments on their rent. Parents attended court with support from Housing Paralegal team and Judge agreed to a suspension of the eviction on condition the parents engaged with and accepted support from Housing to check their income, maximise their benefits and commence rent payments. Parents met with Benefits Officer submitted a claim for UC and have agreed for rent element to be paid direct to LCC with an additional amount to pay off the arrears each month.

Next steps

To build on conversations with Children's Social Work and the Court Bailiff team to ensure we are doing everything possible to support families facing eviction and ensure we continue to try and prevent tenancies failing, up to and including at the point of eviction. We will consult with Children's Social Work Duty and Advise team on our Terms of Reference for requesting warrants to ensure all households with children have been assessed and relevant support provided.

To build on early conversations with Employment & Skills colleagues to improve understanding and build closer working in a bid to better understand and support our tenants needs in accessing training and employment also the wider offer from Employment & Skills around digital inclusion, budgeting, and financial wellbeing.

Priority 2 -Refreshing the Rehousing Pathway for Care Leavers

Update on recent activities.

Leeds Housing Options (LHO) continue to work with partners in children's social care around future joint protocol for assessment of 16/17 year old homeless young people.

Training has been delivered for senior and operational managers within both services to raise awareness of the Southwark Judgement¹⁸ and best practice for handling homeless cases within this age group. The training was delivered by a national expert and has also delivered "train the trainer" sessions so this knowledge and expertise remains available and deliverable in future.

Leeds Housing Options are supporting Adults and Health Commissioning with a successful Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme bid from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities that will see £7,855,257 brought into Leeds for the city. £2,086,332 of his bid is ringfenced for young people who are experiencing severe multiple disadvantages and are a high risk of becoming adult rough sleepers. This money included both revenue and capital and will provide a 5-bed intensive 'Core' environment that will offer a home for at least 3 years, with 247 staffing and specialist support around mental health and trauma as well as 12 dispersed 1 bedroom 'Cluster' houses out in the community with intensive support. The multidisciplinary and intensive support directly attached to an accommodation provider will be the first of its kind and is an exciting opportunity to addressing the needs of individuals that extend beyond housing alone.

Additional cross directorate staff – LHO is now resourcing support to Children's services with the Staying Close project. The focus is to help to rehouse care leavers, specifically those that are accommodated (often at great expense) outside of Leeds. Support currently offered includes dedicated surgeries, providing advice and upskilling staff and tackling barriers that are preventing care leavers from transitioning into independent living'.

Work carried out by the Local Government Authority -funded project to improve the rehousing pathway for young people helped to inform this work through considering available data, relevant policy and strategy documents, semi-structured interviews with internal and external stakeholders, including some young people, dip sampling of 20 recent cases of homeless 16- and 17-year-olds, visits to some services and the author's own knowledge of youth housing options and homelessness.

Consideration has been given to the national context in terms of child poverty, the impact of Covid -19 on young people and on housing and homelessness, cost of living crisis, the housing crisis. Also, the local picture regarding young people, population, deprivation, and the local housing market

Outcomes and outputs:

Dip sampling showed that most teenagers who go on to become homeless at the age of 16 or 17 are already known to Children's Services due to other risks and needs. There are an impressive range of

¹⁸ [Provision of accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds who may be homeless and/or require accommodation - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/provision-of-accommodation-for-16-and-17-year-olds-who-may-be-homeless-and-or-require-accommodation)

universal and more targeted services for children, young people and families in communities, but there are gaps for some 16- and 17-year-olds, often those most at risk of homelessness, especially if they are no longer at school or college. They do not have 'touch points' to services and are at risk of being out of sight when they are at highest risk of homelessness.

Young people learn about housing and their options locally from their families and peers, but this can be supplemented by the provision of local information provided by the local authority or another agency. Realistic information and advice can cover in some detail the realities of living independently and the extent to which some housing options are limited for young people in a local area.

What young people said:

- "They didn't teach us about life – about this - they taught us about passing qualifications. There was no 'what's next?'"
- "They told us about what's in a cell in your body, but not how to actually live".
- "No one gives you a heads up - so you are obviously going to fail and then everyone gets mad at you."
- "I wish we'd learned about money and how to budget."

What young people said about living in non-commissioned 'exempt' supported accommodation in Leeds:

- "My house is so lonely."
- "... advice is 'don't work'. The rent is not affordable if you're working."
- "You're not allowed visitors or family in."
- "My social anxiety is horrible."
- "I find it too overwhelming now - I don't want to sound ungrateful but it's too much, all the bills and it's a massive house."

When asked what they needed at the point of housing crisis young people responded:

- "We need something stable, that's there, that's not going to change, that you know you can rely on."
- "There needs to be more places where you can actually talk to someone."
- "There should be more centres for young people - it's better than being on the street."

Next steps

To progress with the joint assessment protocol and the Young Persons Multi Agency Panel which relaunched in May 2023. The panel is attended by Our Way Leeds – who provide housing support and accommodation to people aged 16-25 living in the city - Children's Services, Corporate Parenting, Youth Justice Team, Housing Options and Housing Management.

To progress with work at the Kirkstall Brewery site to create good quality Council accommodation to temporarily house homeless families and reduce our reliance on bed and breakfast and expensive night by night accommodation. We are working towards occupation in September for housing and are working very closely with Children's and Families as part of the planning.

Priority 3 - Supporting Families in Council Tenancies to Maximise their Income.

Update on recent activities.

During April 2023 and March 2024, the Housing Officer Income (HOI) team worked with **5143** Households in total and been able to secure **£3,175,000** in additional income for them with an average additional income per family of **£617**. Of the **5143** total households supported, **1414** of those were households with children.

This generated for them **£668,000** of additional income which works out as an average of **£472** of additional income per family supported.

We have been able to secure income for households from 19 sources. The 5 top income streams which have generated the most for households are:

1. Universal Credit
2. Housing Benefit
3. Disability Benefits
4. Pension Age Benefits
5. Council Tax Support

The team feel that the current Cost-of-Living crisis is still affecting tenants' city wide and forms the basis for many conversations they are currently having. They increase in referrals for tenants of pension age has continued to increase and they have focused on reaching tenants that that may be eligible for Pension Credits. The team have also worked closely with Leeds Benefits Service (LBS) targeting tenants reported on the Housing Benefit HB stop list and the DHP renewal process.

Tenants are still struggling to make ends meet as neither benefit levels nor wages have increased accordingly. Many of our tenants continue to pay for their fuel via top up meters and are finding it increasingly difficult to find the money to top up as the current situation continues.

Food and Fuel poverty issues are raised by most tenants they engage with regardless of the main reason for referral. This comes at a time they have been able to refer tenants to the LCC/British Gas Emergency Fuel Voucher Scheme which initial run for the second successive year.

The team have been working closely with LBS regarding Pension Credits (PC) & Housing Benefit (HB).

Housing Benefit – LBS provided a list of tenants who they had been unable to contact with regards their HB claim and these had been suspended. Each team member attempted to contact the listed tenants from within their area supporting them to provide necessary information to ensure their claims remained live.

Pension Credits – The team worked closely with LBS who had provided a list of pension age tenants that were not currently in receipt of Pension Credits. Each team member attempted to contact tenants within their areas to perform benefit checks and advise on eligibility/assist with applications where necessary.

A poster campaign was launched within all Retirement Life properties across the city advising tenants that they could be eligible for Pension Credits and encouraging them to contact their local area housing offices for referral to their Housing Officer (Income) (HOI) team member.

Outcomes and outputs:

Case Study 1 – High Rent Arrears due to issues with UC Housing Costs

Mrs B referred to HOI by Housing Officer due to high rent arrears. Mrs B had an Under Occupancy deduction reducing her entitlement to housing costs yet needed to use the additional bedroom for overnight care due to her son's health condition. Mrs B had requested an additional bedroom be awarded previously which would increase her entitlement to housing element to 100% but this was refused. HOI completed a mandatory reconsideration, and the decision was overturned resulting in a large backdate reducing her rent arrears considerably.

There was a third-party deduction in place due to previous HB overpayment significantly reducing her UC award. Liaised with Leeds Benefit Services and who reduced the monthly deduction thereby increasing monthly income by £100pcm. Completed application for Child DLA with decision currently outstanding. Issued food vouchers and referred to the LCC/British Gas Fuel Voucher Scheme which provided short term support.

Case Study 2 – High Rent Arrears due to issues with Housing Benefit Claim

Miss C referred by Housing Office as HB claim had ceased in September 23 resulting in rent arrears of almost £2000. Miss C is a single Mum to 3 children. Miss C was unable to complete HB application due to serious mental health concerns. HOI completed HB reconsideration based on mental health grounds and HB was reinstated with a backdate clearing majority of rent arrears. HB being reinstated prevented a move to UC which would have made Miss C considerably worse off financially. Miss C had made numerous attempts to complete PIP application but issues with her mental health had prevented their completion. HOI made several attempts to complete this with Miss C, but she frequently missed appointments with DWP. HOI liaised with DWP who agreed to accept a paper application for PIP which removed the need for Miss C to attend appointments. Application completed with successful outcome.

Next steps

Our priority will be to continue to support tenants to pay their rent and maintain their tenancy during the cost-of-living Crisis.

We will advise and assist tenants by carrying out income health checks to ensure maximum entitlement is being claimed and where applicable we would request DHP or make referrals to the Leeds Welfare Support Scheme.

We recently moved the Paralegal Team to sit within the Income Service, to better align their work with our priorities. We will be consulting with local housing teams and the Housing Options service on how this resource can be utilised to help those on low incomes who are struggling to make rental payments, sustain their tenancies.

6.0 Employment & Transitions

The aim of this workstream is: ***All young people have access to a wide range of work experience, employment and volunteering opportunities.*** This workstream is led by Dawn Hall, Head of Service Employment and Skills. This is also the services commitment to CFL Wish 11 led by Tracey Greig

Update on recent activities.

Ofsted Inspection 11th – 14th December 2023 – The Employment and Skills Service, Adult Learning and Employer Provider Apprenticeship programmes were judged Outstanding in all areas. Leeds City Council is the first Local Authority to achieve the outstanding judgement since the new Education Inspection Framework (EIF) commenced in September 2019. Ofsted said “Adult learners gain valuable skills, which often transform their lives. They benefit from a highly ambitious curriculum that meets a diverse range of needs across the city, widens participation in learning, improves life chances and develops stronger communities. Learners are supported very well to achieve aspiring and personalised targets relevant to their skills, age and phase of education. They are motivated and empowered to make the transition to further learning or employment.”

Service Engagement during April 2023 – March 2024 32,184 people attended 227 community and school events and activities, including Leeds Apprenticeship Recruitment Fair, Leeds Digital Careers Festival, Leeds Creative Skills Festival and SEND Next Choices.

Leeds Apprenticeships Recruitment Fair took place on 5th February 2024. Visitors were able to find out more about Apprenticeships and meet with providers and employers across all sectors. 119 exhibitors attended on the day to offer information, advice, guidance, and live vacancies. 11,000 visitors had the opportunity to find out about apprenticeships. There were 17 presentations, attended by approximately 250 people which ran throughout the event providing an insight on various topics including STEM, Green Apprenticeships, the power of work experience, a day in the life of an apprentice and how to submit a successful application form.

Yorkshire Learning Providers Awards Ceremony took place on 25th March 2024 at York Racecourse, Employment & Skills Service won the award for Equality and Diversity for our work in delivering the SEND Next Choices event

Connecting Communities to Health and Care Careers focuses on narrowing inequalities with a one system approach across the sector, adapting recruitment methods and building on the good practice models in the system. A hub and spoke adapted recruitment model continues to be expanded, prioritising the most deprived wards across the city. Through extensive community engagement and continuous promotion, 359 have attended an information session, a person-centred approach that provides next steps to recruitment.

From April 2023 to March 2024;

- 106 gained employment
- 118 customers have successfully completed a programme
- 88 are being supported to improve their functional skills to achieve the required level through Adult Learning
- 41 are being supported to move into employment either through the Employment Hub or NHS Talent Pipeline

SEND Next Choices – Getting ready for Adult Life took place on 25th June 2024 for its third year at the Leeds First Direct Arena. The event aims to support young people who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Over 2,000 young people along with parents, carers and teachers attended. There were 75 exhibitors who offered jobs, apprenticeships, volunteering, training opportunities, leisure activities and other dedicated support.

Family Learning taster and engagement sessions were offered, in early spring, at the Family of Schools meeting in Armley. The offer is in response to a request for support from the Communities Team to address high levels of NEET and Unknown in the area.

Following on from the **Hospitality Event** held 23rd February 2024, DWP requested that we replicate the sessions for 2 further jobs fairs being held at Southern House and Pudsey Jobcentre in April. Employment Hub advisors delivered sessions in CV preparation, interview techniques in readiness for the events.

Tech Careers Launchpads specific for WIID (Women in Leeds Digital) events took place on 13th May and 19 June 2024. Part of the series of Tech Launchpad, delivered in partnership with Northcoders and other digital organisations to deliver a workshop for “getting noticed in Tech”, “personal branding”, “confidence building”, panel session and networking.

ASDA MCE - E&S once again supported the Ahead Partnership’s GirlTech event, took place on 17th May 2024 with 120 female students in year 8 from Leeds schools. E&S delivered an Apprenticeship information session workshop and taking part in the career's carousel to inform the students about digital Apprenticeship pathways.

Digital Apprenticeship Info sessions, Leeds City College, occurred on 23rd and 25th April 2024, E&S delivered Apprenticeship information sessions for Digital T-Level students at Leeds City College as part of their ‘World of Work’ week.

Global Banking School Business, Accounting & Digital Jobs Fair was held on 19th April 2024 at Great George Street. E&S delivered a presentation to talk about apprenticeships within this sector.

Leeds SEND Employment Forum took place on 8th May 2024 at Nexus. This forum examined ways to increase employment opportunities for those with Special Educational Needs and/or disabilities.

Local T-level College and University students were welcomed to a Student Insights event at Bruntwood SciTech, Leeds on 24th April 2024 to hear from guest speakers about tech career options in a range of tech roles. Helping to demystify tech roles and highlight the breadth of opportunity available within the sector and with local employers.

Tech Skills Springboard webinar was launched on 18th and 25th April 2024. The initiative is in partnership with Microsoft with University Academy 92 as the skills provider and will deliver a 12-week programme to students aged 14-16 in Leeds. Students will have the option to study tech modules including artificial intelligence, software/app development, cloud computing, and data, focusing on practical digital and business skills that will help students explore topics of interest not covered in traditional education, aiding students with further education study and employment choices.

Connecting Schools to Hospitality programme - a programme of activities has been delivered for schools visiting hotels in the city to get involved in practical activities to experience working in the sector. The programme will conclude in July with a celebration event to be arranged for July.

Working with LCC Children's and Families to deliver a contract with WYCA to explore how good quality careers advice can reduce the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training. Businesses in the city supported over 13 secondary schools and colleges with 29 careers activities including careers fairs, mock interviews, work experience and much more. In total this has supported over 7874 of young people and involved 509 hours during the 2023/24 academic year

During the most recent academic year The Employment and Skills service delivered 105 sessions in secondary schools, FE and 6th form colleges engaging with 8,175 students, 912 parents and 388 teaching staff.

Outcomes and Outputs

From April 2023 to March 2024 13,513 people have accessed our services:

8,674 (64%) of those accessing the service live in neighbourhoods that fall within the 20% most deprived SOA's on the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

8,328 (62%) customers identified as ethnically diverse and 737 (5%) declared a physical disability and 857 (6%) experience poor mental health.

2,559 (19%) customers were young people age 16-24.

Supported 2,457 people into work (including 324 Apprenticeships):

1,361 (55%) of those supported into work live in neighbourhoods that fall within the 20% most deprived SOAs on the Index of Multiple Deprivation

1,145 (47%) customers identified as ethnically diverse and 67 (3%) declared a physical disability, 89 (4%) experience poor mental health

679 (28%) customers were young people aged 16-24

Supported 4,300 people to improve their skills:

2,675 (62%) of these learners lived in neighbourhoods that fall within the 20% most deprived SOAs on the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

2,837 (66%) learners identified as ethnically diverse, and 377 (9%) learners declared a physical disability and 457 (11%) experience poor mental health.

460 (11%) customers were young people aged 16-24.

Engaged with 498 employers new to the service to secure jobs, skills, Apprenticeships and education outcomes:

Of the 113 employers engaged this quarter:

86 were SMEs.

27 were large organisations (250+ employees)

Support was provided across all sectors of industry including:

- o Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities
- o Professional, scientific and technical activities
- o Health & Care (including Childcare)

Next Steps

Connecting Communities to Health and Care Careers Information and Assessment Sessions will be delivered at sites across the Priority Wards and City Centre Hub in line with planned pre-employment courses. The sessions will continue to support recruitment to roles within the Health and Care sector, including Adult Social Care, Children's Residential Practitioner and Administrative roles. Additional Community Learning provision will also be in place.

Multiply Programmes planned for delivery within the Priority Wards. Venues will include Armley Hub, Dixons Academy, DROSC, Middleton family hub. Advisors will be working with the organisations to identify areas of focus for the programmes. Delivery continues with 'money and work' sessions at both Merrion House and Compton Centre; targeted drop-in support at Merrion House to support learners into employment in partnership with social care recruitment. A range of new courses continue to take place to support learners at Greenmount Primary school; Gipton South Childrens Centre; Bankside primary school; Shakespeare Primary school; Hillcrest Academy and BITMO. Awareness raising activity planned such as 'Nelly' the bus visiting Leeds Kirkgate Market. Videos and case studies will take place for learners who have secured employment as a result of Multiply and wider E&S support. Over 600 learners will be supported between now and end of March 25.

7.0 Family Help

The aim of this workstream is: *We want to ensure that children, young people and families experiencing poverty are able to access help and support without stigma or prejudice.*

This workstream is led by Farrah Khan, Deputy Director Social Care, Children and Families Service.

7.1 Priority 1 – Connecting services to better support families.

Update on recent activities.

Family Hubs are being developed across Leeds, in line with national policy and our own local priorities. The purpose of Family Hubs is to bring together multiple organisations to make it easier for families to get the help they need. As Leeds already has a network of Community Hubs, work is being done to integrate the new Family Hub approach into our existing Community Hub arrangements wherever possible.

Family Hubs will unite a number of different organisations, so that people only have to explain what they need help with once, rather than having to tell many different people. Meanwhile, professionals will be able to work together more effectively to help overcome any difficulties families might be facing.

Family Hubs will consist of social workers, family help practitioners, mental health coordinators, substance use coordinators, domestic violence coordinators, SEND coordinators and the police. There will be seven Family Hubs developed across the city to serve the needs of all communities and linked directly into an existing Community Hub.

The Family Hubs are integral to the Community Hubs and the way in which these services will work together is critical to the effective delivery for children and families.

Empowering Parents Empowering Communities (EPEC) continues to be delivered and 2024 will see the additional recruitment and training of volunteers in 'Being a Parent' and 'Living with a teenager' programmes. The key objective for 2024 is to deliver EPEC citywide in order to reach more families.

Childrens services continue to support the Communities directorate Migrant Access Project (MAP). The project works to ensure new and emerging communities in Leeds get an understanding of local services through Migrant Community Networkers (MCNs). 2024 will see specialist briefings to upskills MCNs on child exploitation.

It was highlighted in 2023 that there are several Families living in B&B accommodation. Childrens services will support the introduction of Kirkstall Forge temporary an Early Help offer of support for these Families. This will be aligned with the Family & Community hubs and Childrens Centres offers and will be in the form of a bespoke leaflet specific for the location providing advice on local amenities such as the library, local children's centre, parks and children's activities.

We continue to work alongside the Leeds Childrens charity who have provided many free activities for disadvantaged children and families over the summer period. This has provided opportunities for Children to take part in new activities as well as meet footballers from Leeds United. This partnership will grow in 2024 with the introduction of more activity offers for children and families supported through Family Help.

Outcomes and outputs

Childrens Services to deliver briefings on Child exploitation to the MAP.

EPEC delivery for January 2024 targeted East Leeds. Going forward we will deliver in other areas of Leeds.

Next steps

EPEC 'Living with a Teen' course will launch Spring 2024. The 2024 timetable will see expansion into other areas of Leeds.

To develop support offers for families living in temporary accommodation.

7.2 Priority 2 – tackling inequality in accessing services and support.

Update on recent activities

Childrens Services are committed to the voice of parents and children being at the heart of everything we do. We have held an annual 'Let's talk' session for several years now, and the latest was held in November 2023 with over 30 parents attending. The event was also attended by Senior Leaders committed to hearing the voice and experiences of parents.

Let's Talk has been instrumental in developing parent led training for social workers, advocacy for parents involved with child protection conferences and peer training courses.

Next steps

Through Let's talk sessions we now have 3 advocates volunteers actively advocating for families within child protection.

We are planning to hold our first parent support group for Parents who have experienced the child protection system. This followed feedback from Let's Talk sessions that there was a great need for this support. The support group will involve upskilling parents on processes in addition to self-care support.

7.3 Priority 3 – Workforce Development

Update on recent activities.

The launch of the revised early help documentation and notification (formerly registration) process happened in the summer of 2023:

The launch reached colleagues from across the Children and Families Partnership with 398 accessing the on-line briefings and 248 accessing the early help practice and process development sessions. Attendance of the latter was dominated by primary school, children centre and cluster staff. 73% (180/248) of

attendees at the practice development sessions completed an evaluation; 70% (126/180) had attended an on-line briefing first. Feedback overall was very positive with 88% affirming that their skills, confidence and knowledge had been enhanced and 93% finding the activities and materials very useful. The full report includes an analysis of feedback which was grouped into three themes: (1) the response to the revised documentation and processes generally, (2) attendees' experience of the early help practice and process session and (3) further support needs. Multiple recommendations were made in response and to progress this work further.

The Report's recommendations include:

- 1) Implement a sustainable rolling programme of early help practice and process sessions - as structured in July 2023 - delivered once per term for an average of 15 participants and supported by two or three leaders.
- 2) Review the extent to which the cascading of the strategic message has reached senior leaders in settings and services and identify further opportunities through existing forums (e.g., Head teachers Forum, Best Start Board etc.) to promote these and secure alignment with the revised documentation and notification process.
- 3) Liaise with Targeted Service Leads to explore further support and training needs required for schools within cluster arrangements to adopt the revised documentation.
- 4) Target secondary schools outside of cluster arrangements to ensure key messages have been cascaded and to encourage their adoption of the revised documentation.
- 5) Liaise with the youth service to explore further communication and support needs to ensure key messages have reached this service and respond to any further support to adopt the revised documentation.
- 6) Identify how best to communicate with post-16 providers and ensure they have received the key messages and understand expectations to adopt the revised documentation.
- 7) Liaise with health colleagues to determine if there is additional support required to cascade key messages and support the adoption of new processes and the early help notification only documentation.
- 8) Establish the Early Help Champion role to create a supportive network that brings practitioners together, develops relationships and shares knowledge and skills across the system.
- 9) Create a film targeted at young people and families that explains the early help documentation and notification process.
- 10) Develop and resource a plan for the quality assurance of early help work submitted to the local authority for the purposes of notification in order to inform further training and development needs.

During October 2023 2 bespoke briefings were delivered by the Financial Inclusion team to Childrens Services covering support available for families. The briefing included details of household support fund, healthy holidays, utility support, food support and general money advice. Over 300 practitioners attended the training and found the information very useful. Practitioners told us the most common needs they support families with are; damp/ mould problems, overcrowded housing, debts for utilities including water, families not attending hospital appointments due to travel costs, foodbanks having to limit families access, childcare provision closing which in turn is seeing parents not able to work, family stress and the link this is having on school attendance, demand in need for baby essentials, and a rise in criminal exploitation.

Delivered by Professor Claudia Bernard, the "Poverty and neglect masterclass" was delivered to Services practitioners in November 2023. The masterclass drew on current knowledge to address neglect- the most common form of child abuse. It also focused on the discourse about the links between poverty and neglect.

Outcome and Outputs

- 248 practitioners attended Early Help practice and process in person sessions. 398 attended the online briefing.
- 300 practitioners attended the 'available support for families' briefing.

Next steps

The Early Help Registration Task and Finish Group is implementing the recommendations from the Early Help paperwork process. Recurring feedback includes an ask that there is the 'buy-in' of senior leaders; supporting them to have the time and capacity to align their early help work to the Leeds Practice Model. The extent to which this workstream has impacted upon an increase in early help notifications is to be analysed and reported to the next Board meeting in September 2024.

Beginning in 2024, Poverty briefings will be delivered within Childrens Services every 2 months. These will cover various topics including practical support for families, risk of loan sharks- how to identify and what support is available, supporting conversations with families around poverty, Marmot city, regular updates from the Poverty board workstreams.

To support wish 8 (supporting families experiencing poverty) of the Child Friendly Leeds wishes, a blog has been developed for the Child Friendly Leeds social media. This includes fun, free activities for families in addition to practical support that families can access. The intention is to have a link to this from the Money Information Centre to improve communication to families as well as create awareness for practitioners. In addition, we are also working on a booklet of support which will be available to professionals supporting children and families. The booklet provides detailed information on support available to families and how professionals can make a referral. Examples include local foodbank provision/ support with utilities/ babybank.

8.0 – Removing Barriers to Learning

The aim of this workstream is: *We want to support schools and settings to ensure that CYP who live in poverty can access learning and improve their educational experiences and outcomes.*

8.1 Priority 1 Early Years - Take up of free nursery places for 2, 3 and 4-year-olds.

Update on recent activities.

Leeds entered into a long-term partnership with Nesta alongside York and Stockport called Fairer Start Leeds and is a three-to-five-year innovation partnership with an aim to work together so that all children have a brighter start for a stronger future. The partnership centres on a shared commitment to reimagining early years support to deliver tangible improvement to the lives of disadvantaged children. There is a greater focus on collaborative working with York and Stockport, sharing the learning across the partnership.

We are now in the third year of our partnership with Nesta and the focus for the project involves NESTA working with the Children's Speech and Language Therapy Service, Leeds' Library Services and Leeds Council to see if we can find new ways to work together to improve support for children and parents by looking into how Speech and Language support and services can be improved within Leeds.

This work aimed to develop a better understanding of:

Common referral sources to the CLST service and characteristics of children/families referred from different sources

- Socio-demographic and economic characteristics of children and families currently on the CLST waitlist broken down by whether or not they are re-referrals and/or accepted by the service.
- Whether wider language and communication support in Leeds (inc. library services) is geographically targeted by need, correlated with outcomes and whether there are differences in acceptance to the CLST service by area
- Differences and accuracy in CLST service pathways
- Differences in episodes of care including wait times between discharge and re-referral and between re-referral and appointment

Outcomes and Outputs

As a result of the above, a revised pathway into the speech & language therapy service has been developed along with a communication & language toolkit available for all practitioners to use. Recent workshops

have been delivered across the city to launch this toolkit and were attended by health & early years/ education practitioners.

Two-year-olds take-up

Leeds has an average take-up city wide of 72.7%, based on three terms worth of data (Spring 2023, Summer 2023 and Autumn 2023). The inner-city areas of Harehills (50.5%), Woodhouse (56.9%), and Holbeck (62.4%) are still significantly below the city average. Further work to increase take-up in these areas is a priority as is Richmond Hill (59.1%) which is now also a priority area.

Burmantofts, which was a priority area in 2022, now has an uptake close to the city average (72.6%)

Inner City Areas with lowest uptake (2023)

PPA	Average Uptake of 2-Year-Old Places (2023)
Harehills	50.5%
Woodhouse	56.9%
Richmond Hill	59.1%
Holbeck	62.4%

Eligible Children

City wide, the number of 2-year-olds eligible for FEEE funding has decreased over the past 3 years: From 3609 in Spring 2021 to 2746 in Autumn 2023.

Three and four-year-olds take-up

Take up of FEEE for 3- and 4-year-olds in Summer 2023 was 92.2%, which is an increase of 0.6 percentage points on Summer 2022 (91.6%) and an increase of 3.2 percentage points since Summer 2021 (89.0%).

The area of Harehills is an outlier with significantly lower uptake than other areas; in Summer 2023 there were 1,119 children living in this area who were eligible for a funded place, but only 70.4% took one. This means 331 eligible - & 4-year-olds in Harehills did not access nursery funding in this term. Harehills is deemed to be the priority area in the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment, to increase take-up.

Other areas of concern are Chapel Allerton (85.9%); Burmantofts (88.1%) and Holbeck (89.8% uptake).

Next steps

In preparation for the new Two-Year-Old scheme from April 2024 for eligible working parents, Leeds Family Information Service are hoping to capture some data from providers (via a survey), to understand the number of children currently in settings and paying for childcare, who are likely to become eligible for a funded place of 15 hours from April onwards. The Department for Education haven't yet launched the application portal, but the criteria will broadly follow that for the current 30 hr scheme. This will help inform where there may potentially be sufficiency issues within Leeds. The survey closed on 26 January.

8.2 Priority 2 – Emotional Health and wellbeing/ Mental Health

Update on recent activities.

The My Health, My School (MHMS) annual school survey 2022-23 launched to schools in September 2022 for the academic year. All participating schools were able to access their own survey data to inform planned interventions. The Health & Wellbeing Services collated data at a city-wide level. The MHMS survey is included in the actions within priority 4 of The Refreshed 3As Plan.

Outcomes and outputs

A total of 25,648 pupil responses were received from 202 Leeds schools and settings participating in the 2022-23 survey. The raw data survey results were made publicly available on Data Mill North. A number of resultant Annual Reports, reflecting the survey themes were also published. Broadscale consultation on the

MHMS survey question set for 2023-24 commenced at the beginning of February and was open for a 4-month period. Leeds City Council Service representatives were invited to review and suggest amendments to the survey questions to be used with schools for the 2023-24 academic year as well as being tabled as agenda items on various strategic Programme/Project Boards facilitating broader discussion. Following the review, the survey was revised, amendments made and drafted for approval by Steering Group members over summer 2023. The revised My Health, My School survey went live to schools in September 2023. As of January 2024, there have been an encouraging number of 6871 survey responses from 53 Leeds schools and settings indicating a degree of confidence that the total number of survey returns for the 2023-24 academic year will be at least in line with last year's results.

Next steps

December's MHMS Steering Group meeting 2023 considered survey results from the 2022-23 survey and endorsed a subsequent survey consultation this year on the question set for the My Health, My School SEND survey 2024-25. In light of the continued increased annual uptake of the survey, both in the number of responses and numbers of participating schools year on year a proposal to further strengthen governance arrangements for the survey was accepted. The plan is to complement the Steering Group through establishing a new, formalised, multi-agency Management Group capturing expertise from beyond LCC (e.g., NHS, Leeds University, Leeds Trinity University, etc.) to work alongside LCC colleagues. This will provide greater, more immediate day to day support and a bridging mechanism between the Operational and Steering Groups. The Management Group will provide further rigour on the question set, data analysis and proposed changes going forward aiding development of the survey and is to be underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

8.3 Priority 3 – The 3 As strategy - working with schools to improve attendance, achievement and attainment.

Update of recent activities

The 3A's Strategy is has been refreshed. The refreshed strategy takes into account the change of one of the CYPP obsessions that *"young people in Leeds attend school, achieve, and attain well"*, and they also *"continue their route of a sustained education, apprenticeship or employment destination"*.

The '3 As' is a directorate-wide strategy which identifies how LA services can support schools in their work with young people to raise outcomes.

- **Attainment:** children reach their full potential in learning
- **Attendance:** children need to attend school as much as possible for them, not just to learn, but to be safe and build friendships
- **Achievement:** all children have the opportunity to take part in positive activities in their local community such as sports, the arts and volunteering.

The strategy focuses on the learning and outcomes of all the children and young people in Leeds including those living in areas of the city with high indices of multiple deprivation, children looked after, children and young people with SEND, vulnerable learners and children and young people experiencing SEMH problems.

The Refreshed strategy has the following five priorities...

- Priority 1 - All children and young people in Leeds are supported to improve their communication, language, and literacy so they develop into strong readers taking into account their individual needs.
- Priority 2 - Support education providers to ensure children and young people regularly attend.
- Priority 3 - Support education settings to meet the needs of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

- Priority 4 - All children and young people and staff in learning settings feel safe and supported with their wellbeing.
- Priority 5 - Ensure all young people in Leeds participate in education, employment and training after statutory school age and progress to a positive destination.

Outcomes and outputs

The new 3As strategy was approved at the end of December 2023 and was launched in early 2024 and therefore outcomes and outputs will be reported at the next meeting.

Next steps

Once approved the next steps will be to implement the actions detailed on the plan. An update will be provided on the next report.

9.0 Green Spaces

The aim of this workstream is: *We want to improve access to green spaces and opportunities to play in priority wards by cultivating the time, space and attitudes needed for children's play improving the quality of existing green spaces, and making streets safe, playful spaces for people to connect.*

This workstream is led by Sarah Wilson, Senior Design Officer and Jenny Rutherford from Child Friendly Leeds Team.

Priority 1 Play Sufficiency

Update on recent activities

Active Leeds and Child Friendly Leeds are working in partnership on the Play Sufficiency project. Play Sufficiency is about securing sufficient opportunities for children's play and that involves far more than simply looking at designated provisions (although these are still important). Securing sufficient opportunities for play is about cultivating the time, space and attitudes needed for children's play to flourish, in their homes, on doorsteps and residential streets, within local neighbourhoods and across local authority policy and practice.

Play Sufficiency is an ongoing process of research and action to assess, improve and protect children's opportunities for play. The assessment stage explores what is working for who, where and why at a neighbourhood and organisational and/or local authority level.

Research has been conducted in priority wards in the South, East and West of the city (Boggart Hill; Lincoln Green; Cliftons and Nowells; Holbeck and Beeston Hill; New Wortley). Active Leeds and Child Friendly Leeds are currently writing up the Play Sufficiency Assessment Report, which collates all of the background, context and findings from the extensive research programme.

On September 26th the Play Sufficiency team hosted a Strategic Priorities Workshop at John Charles Centre for Sport. Ben Tawil and Mike Barclay, play consultants from Ludicology commissioned to guide us through the Play Sufficiency work in Leeds, provided a brief overview of the Play Sufficiency process and the principles behind this approach. Active Leeds and Child Friendly Leeds then presented each priority, with supporting background research. Over half of the session was dedicated to discussion focused on each strategic priority: What work is already going on? What are the challenges to delivering this priority? How can we work collectively to progress this priority for children, families and communities in priority wards.

See below for Play Sufficiency priorities:

- Priority 1: Facilitate the cross-service endorsement of Play Sufficiency and embed key principles within Leeds City Council departments.
- Priority 2: Celebrate and enable parents and carers permissions, confidences and skills for play.
- Priority 3: Grow a play workforce of adults whose work directly and indirectly impacts upon children and their play.
- Priority 4: Facilitate sufficient time, space and attitudes towards play in educational settings.
- Priority 5: Enable sufficient time, space, design and attitudes to play for children with protected characteristics.
- Priority 6: Create streets that are safe, welcoming and encourage children's play.
- Priority 7: Improve the variety of spaces available for play for all age groups within close proximity of children's homes (including informal and designated spaces).
- Priority 8: Improve access to nature-based play environments.
- Priority 9: Improve the perception of teenagers and improving their opportunities to play and hang out.

The Strategic Priorities Workshop brought together representatives from across the council to think collectively about how to improve opportunities for play in priority wards. The energy and commitment in the room was evident. From the Open Space Spotlight key ideas and actions were put forward that can be fed directly into the next phase: the write up of the Play Sufficiency Action Plan.

Play Sufficiency was taken to Exec Board in December 2023 and all recommendations approved. This was a joint report by Child Friendly Leeds and Active Leeds and presented by Cllr Venner, with comments from Cllr Arif. The work follows the 2007 Play Strategy which included a call for a citywide Play Partnership. A strategic board – the Play Sufficiency Partnership, supports the project, formed of LCC representatives and partners. The paper proposed that a Play Champion is appointed from Executive Board, who will lead the development of an Action Plan which will report annually to Executive Board. Councillor Venner has agreed to be the named champion.

Outcomes and outputs

Full Play Sufficiency Assessment report to be completed in 2024. This will share detailed findings about factors supporting and constraining children's freedoms to play. The Play Sufficiency Assessment report will be shared with partners who have been involved with the project so that they can comment on the draft report.

Play Sufficiency research has been used to bring in significant external funding to priority wards in the south of the city. The National Lottery Reaching Communities bid funding will deliver a project that focuses specifically on play, responding to the Play Sufficiency insight which articulates how children feel about their opportunities to play in their local area. Ludicology will also be involved in evaluation of the project.

In early May, the strategic board – the Play Sufficiency Partnership – will convene to drive forward the Play Sufficiency Action Plan. This will focus on the principle that play is everyone's business. The cross-directorate and city-wide partnership will drive towards achieving ambitious outcomes made possible through a whole systems approach.

A Leeds Community of Play has been established, led by a small steering group of partners. Close partnership work with [Playful Anywhere](#) has catalysed the coming together of playful and creative organisations, largely made up from the third sector and community/voluntary sector. Playful Anywhere CIC is a Leeds-based social enterprise with a mission to catalyse creativity, inventiveness and playfulness, where we work, live and travel. The Community of Play operates in parallel to a Festival of Play 2024 (a DIY two-week city-wide festival of play) and holds a space for

playful people, partners and businesses to connect, build relationships and network to champion and advocate for children's right to play.

A Play Sufficiency workshop has been delivered in partnership with the Safer Stronger Communities team at the Armley Children, Young People and Families Partnership. Specific local Play Sufficiency data was shared with a selection of different partners, including elected members, third sector partners, policing teams and teams from across Leeds City Council.

Next steps

- To share finding of the research through a series of community workshops
- To embed Play Sufficiency principles, findings and recommendations within the Priority Neighbourhood Partnership Plans in priority wards of the city.
- Complete all resources to share across teams within the council. This will include:
 - The development of a video outlining our key research findings and priorities
 - A set of Play Pamphlets that will go into greater detail focusing on our key themes.
 - A full Play Sufficiency Assessment report
 - An abridged Play Sufficiency Assessment report
- Produce a Play Sufficiency Action Plan

Priority 2 Planning for Play

Update on recent activities

The Planning Service influences the provision of green space and play in new developments through engagement with National Government, Local Plan policies, design guidance and consultation with technical specialists during the consideration of planning applications.

Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (LUHC) Committee Inquiry

The (LUHC) Committee has launched an inquiry looking at how better planning and building and urban design in England could enhance the health and well-being of children and young people.

The inquiry states:

It's important for children and young people's mental and physical health that they have access to spaces to play and to socialise.

In our inquiry, we want to find out more about how children and young people experience outdoor spaces in towns, cities and rural areas across England. What policy interventions from local and central government could help to deliver streets, estates, villages, neighbourhoods and parks that enable kids to enjoy active outdoor lifestyles and engage with others?

Child Friendly Leeds and Strategic Planning (Policy and Plans) responded to this inquiry with best practice in Leeds (and elsewhere) and made recommendations regarding next steps. The CFL 12 Wishes, Play Sufficiency and play streets featured heavily as part of this submission to demonstrate the ways in which Leeds City Council are already working to tackle the issues that this inquiry highlights.

Over 100 organisations and individuals submitted written evidence to the inquiry, collectively making the case that more needs to be done to consider and meet children's needs in the planning process and in government policy. [Intelligent Health](#) was one of the organisations submitting into the inquiry and they cited Leeds as best practice in relation to the flagship work around Play Sufficiency. Leeds was also referenced during the inquiry panel by Alice Ferguson, Associate and Board Director of Playing Out as being a 'gold standard' for our work on Play Sufficiency.

Our work contributing to the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (LUHC) Committee Inquiry has resulted in an invitation to deliver a workshop at the TCPA conference: *Developing well – creating places and spaces where children and young people thrive*. Play Strategy Officer, Senior Planning Officer (Policy and Plans) and Councillor Venner (Executive Member for Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships and nominated Play Champion for the city) delivered this session in June 2024.

Local Plan update

The Leeds Local Plan is made up of a number of documents that contain planning policies that guide the amount and location of development in the Leeds district. It also includes more detailed topic-specific policies that will guide different types of development, and make sure that priorities such as design, green space, heritage, infrastructure, flood risk management are considered during decision making.

We are required to review our planning policies every 5 years, to check they are still working, relevant and fit for purpose, and to identify any policy gaps that may have arisen. Following a review of all our Local Plan policies in 2020, a number of policies requiring update were identified. These include policies on green space and new policy G4b is proposed to ensure new developments include good quality green space and play:

In order to be considered high quality new green and blue space should seek to meet the following objectives:

- c. serve multifunctional purposes for human health, recreation, play sufficiency, ecology, carbon capture and adaptation to the impacts of climate change.
- e. usable for recreation including facilitating movement, play – both formal and informal, rest and observing nature
- o. a mix of formal and in-formal play provision with innovative spaces using natural materials and varied planting to allow imaginative play and connection to nature.
- p. is suitable for children and young people of different ages and abilities in line with local play sufficiency.
- q. Any play provision needs to be designed in accordance with national guidance (such as Fields in Trust) and local play sufficiency assessments.

Additionally, further consideration is being given to how the Local Plan can include reference to the provision on indoor play facilities associated with high density residential schemes particularly in the city centre.

Final public consultation on the first Local Plan update is underway before the plan is submitted to the Secretary of State for public examination. A further Local Plan update is currently being scoped ('Local Plan 2040') and this is likely to include specific play sufficiency policies.

Design guidance

Green Space guidance for how green spaces should be designed in planning applications for proposed developments was finalised and published on the Council's website in August 2023 for use by Developers, Designers, Planning Officers.

The guidance is intended to set the standard for good quality green space and play until new Local Plan policy G4b is adopted; and includes good design principles for green space location, layout, accessibility and play provision.

Outcomes and outputs

Ongoing monitoring of policy and guidance use by officers and resulting green space and play quality will be carried out.

Next steps

Continue to support Planning Policy colleagues with adoption of new green space policy, and advocate for the inclusion of play sufficiency in Local Plan 2040.

Deliver workshop at the TCPA conference (June 2024).

Ahead of the conference, develop a network of local planning authorities interested in Play Sufficiency and play and the built environment.

Deliver training for elected Members on planning and play, alongside Planning Policy colleagues. This will involve looking at a range of ways in which Members can support children's right to play and will provide guidance on how to design in opportunities for good quality play.

Priority 3 Urban 95 Project

Update on recent activities

A Leeds team of three representatives from the Council have recently completed the Urban95 Academy programme: a global sponsored leadership course designed for local governments that are dedicated to early childhood development. The programme was delivered online over seven weeks, during which city leaders learned how to plan, design and implement child-focused infrastructure, policies and programmes related to public space, neighbourhood planning, mobility and transport whilst also developing effective analysis, strategy and leadership skills. The programme focused on how to design better cities for babies, toddlers and their caregivers.

As part of this work, the Leeds Team highlighted a local challenge for our city and designed an outline strategy for how to address this challenge. The priority for Leeds was to address the dominance of the car and how this impacted children's opportunities to play in the streets and green spaces around their homes. Children are becoming less visible in our streets and across our built environment. Nationally and globally there has been a significant shift in the function of streets, with competing demands between the place and movement function. It's about a better design of streets that need to function as spaces that allow people to connect with one another, that can connect cities but at the same time offer opportunities as places for public engagement and play.

The strategy focuses on how the Council could introduce low traffic/active travel type initiatives positively to communities through the lens of play (It's worth noting that the terminology 'active travel' and 'low traffic' would not be used as part of this project).

This proposal places great emphasis on the importance of playful, in-depth and thorough engagement. There are two strands to this engagement:

1. Partner engagement – the power of play as an organising principle to ensure that stakeholders across different departments and directorates are working towards a collective vision and set of outcomes.
2. Community engagement – empowering communities to make decisions about the spaces and culture of their neighbourhood. Residents work towards a collective vision of what they want their neighbourhoods to look and feel like

Community engagement would focus primarily through the lens of play and would be coordinated through the organisation Playful Anywhere. Founder Emma Bearman says: 'Play is a great way to bring people together to catalyse a space and to imagine the potential of what it could be'. This is really the guiding principle of our engagement approach.

Engagement Methods:

The Playbox

- **Catalyst for play:** The brightly coloured box is an immediate invitation to play and be curious. It draws people to a space and gives permission for play. This is really important. So often in Leeds it's not the case that neighbourhoods contain no playable space, but rather that spaces aren't giving permission for play and inviting social interaction. The presence of the Playbox – in an immediate sense will facilitate play and provide opportunities for play. This is crucial to healthy childhood development and ultimately creating better cities for children, for families and for everyone.
- **Catalyst for conversation:** The Playbox animates a space and creates an inviting environment that draws people in. This is often one of the most difficult parts of community engagement: the initial starting point. The approach with the Playbox helps to break down these initial barriers. Its physical structure is robust, and it can be left in situ without fear of damage. It can collect and share stories, data and information like a gallery space. It prompts the imagination by virtue of being in a space and makes people think differently from the get-go.

Play Streets

Running alongside the neighbourhood planning thread catalysed by the Playbox will be the second strand of community engagement: play streets. Supporting residents to open streets for play will allow them to experience how streets change when you remove the dominance of the car. It is a powerful way to visualise your neighbourhood: presenting opportunities for play, socialising and positive interactions. Caregivers can conceive how it feels for toddlers to play in public realm without fear of speeding cars; possibilities for unused space to become a focus for exploring nature and growing plants; plain walls can become a canvas for local art. Residents start to reclaim space and understand how they have the power to shape the neighbourhood they live in.

Play Street Enablement Project

Child Friendly Leeds have secured funding to continue work on the Play Streets Enablement project. This project focuses specifically on priority wards, where the benefits of play streets would be significant, but where a resident's capacity for completing the play streets application process independently may be limited. Third sector partners will be commissioned to support residents to organise play streets and get them up and running, with the long-term vision being that residents will feel confident in sustaining these sessions independently. Focused work is likely to take place in the following areas: Seacroft; Lincoln Green; Halton Moor; Osmondthorpe; Middleton; Holbeck. We will be looking to coordinate this project with a range of services who can signpost to much needed support and resources, highlighting just how powerful play streets can be as a tool for community development. The project aims to bring opportunities to play and socialise – as well as support and services – to the doorstep.

Partnerships with third sector, including Incredible Edible, will enable a holistic approach to streets in priority areas. The project will encourage residents to think about their street as a space to play, socialise and connect – as well as facilitating opportunities to grow healthy foods or identify blank space for community murals.

Child Friendly Leeds have also secured funding in partnership with Leeds University to receive portable air quality monitors. This project will run in conjunction with the play streets enablement work so that residents (ideally it will be children who are leading on this work) can monitor levels of air pollutants outside of, during and after playstreet sessions.

Outcomes and outputs

Data collection regarding play streets will be collected at a city-wide level e.g., Number of play streets (including number of new play streets); number of regular play streets (streets that have an Annual Pass and hold play streets regularly throughout the year); location of play streets (with a particular focus on deprivation).

Through the Play Streets Enablement project, third sector partners will support in reporting on progress in priority wards e.g., number of new and regular play streets; occurrence of play streets; evaluation and impact (with a focus on the voice of children and young people); case studies.

Leeds University will collect and analyse air quality data from streets/play streets and will report on key findings. There will be a focus on priority wards.

Play Strategy Officer (Child Friendly Leeds) is also beginning to deliver training sessions to key Leeds City Council services based on the Urban95 learning.

Where the Urban95 Academy strategy is piloted, a case study will be produced to evaluate and monitor impact.

Next steps

As part of the Urban95 Academy, the Leeds Team submitted the local challenge and outline strategy (referenced above: How to positively introduce low traffic/active travel type initiatives through the lens of play). Ten cities are selected to attend a residence week in London where they are matched with a technical partner (e.g., Arup; Gehl; NACTO etc.) who can work intensively with the Local Authority to develop the outline strategy and have it ready for delivery. Due to the strength of Leeds' outline strategy, the Leeds team are now an alternate city. Should any city not be able to attend the residence week, then the Leeds Team will attend.

The Child Friendly Leeds team are pushing ahead with the outline strategy – having received high recommendation from the Urban95 Academy team – and are currently in the process of sourcing funding to pilot this work in Lincoln Green (as well as Meanwood, which is not in a priority ward).

Partnership working to progress the play streets and air quality monitoring projects will continue to develop. These projects will be ongoing from September 2023. Third Sector partners have been identified and are currently going through the commissioning process.

Priority 4 – Lincoln Green

Update on recent activities

Roxby Community Garden (former disused play area) was completed in May 2023 and Mafwa Theatre (community theatre company working mainly with women from migrant backgrounds) have held several community events in the space including theatre performance, live music, dance, art, gardening and craft activities for children and adults.

The Lincoln Greeners gardening group continue to meet every Tuesday and are growing a range of fruit, vegetables and flowers.

Urban Trails are being designed across Burmantofts, Richmond Hill, Harehills as part of a Department for Transport funded walking, cycling, wheeling project and Lincoln Green has been identified as a pilot area for a play-focused trail. A series of design workshops and a site visit were held in August and September 2023, and consultation days were held in Lincoln Green and Richmond Hill in April 2024 to find out what residents think of the trail ideas. Detailed proposals are now being designed by the project team for further discussion with community stakeholders.

Plans for a Playbox are at the very early stages. Play Sufficiency research highlighted that there were very limited opportunities for children to play in their local area. The Playbox – a corrugated shipping container – provides a prompt for children's play, as well as holding a space for community conversations. The design and content of the Playbox is unique to each space it inhabits and can be developed by the local community and key partners. Currently, the idea of a partnership with Mafwa Theatre is being explored.

A Neighbourhood Plan for Mabgate, Lincoln Green and Burmantofts is under development by local groups supported by the Council. In partnership with Leeds City Council's Planning and Housing teams and East Street Arts, the future play box has been identified as a useful tool to engage with children, young people and families (as well as the wider community) in developing the Neighbourhood Plan, influencing the design of their neighbourhood and responding to the strategic priorities from the Play Sufficiency Assessment

Outcomes and outputs

Success of completed and developing green space and play improvement projects to be measured through ongoing engagement with Shakespeare Primary School, Mafwa Theatre and the Lincoln Greeners.

Next steps

Design development of the Urban Trails and play box and ongoing partnership working with Neighbourhood Plan team, Housing team and third sector partners.