



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PAPER

### Introduction

1. Leeds Metropolitan University's main aim is to provide a top quality education to our 26,000 students. 22% (almost 6,000) come from families resident in Leeds. The families of another 37% of our students live in West Yorkshire. Nearly 60% of our staff (1,800 people) live in Leeds. In total, 2,500 (80%) live in West Yorkshire. The impact on the national economy of Leeds Met's expenditure in 2006 was calculated to be the equivalent of around 6,400 jobs and £514 million in output. The impact on the local economy of Leeds Met's expenditure in 2006 was calculated to be the equivalent of around 4,200 jobs and £295 million in output. In this very real sense, Leeds Met is embedded in the city and the region. Our Vision & Character commits us to improving the students' experience through engaging with communities, developing volunteering among staff and students, and creating meaningful partnerships with cultural, sporting, business, educational and community organisations. This paper outlines how we can develop our community partnerships. Most of our partners are in Leeds, but our regional and international partnerships have similar elements.

### Body of Report

#### Principles:

2. Our community partnerships are based on four R's: Respect, Reciprocity, Renewal and Reflection. We respect our partners (and they respect us); our partnerships are reciprocal (both parties benefit from our activities together); we are committed to renewing and refreshing our staff and students and to neighbourhood renewal alongside our community partners; and we will continuously reflect on what we have learned, what all parties have gained, and on what can be improved.

#### Leeds: Live It, Love It, Share It

3. Leeds Metropolitan University is fully committed to developing the best features of the city, ameliorating the worst and

developing the ethics of sharing and inclusivity. We are committed to improving the sporting, educational, cultural and community work we do in and for the city and the region. All this activity, and much of our students' course work, expresses our aim to reduce social disadvantage, increase tolerance and promote social cohesion. We aim to share our expertise and our facilities wherever feasible. As the next section indicates, we open our facilities to our community partners. Our sport and leisure facilities at the Headingley Campus are excellent and are widely used by partners. We welcome suggestions from local residents groups for further activities. We have academic and other staff with specific expertise in a wide range of areas including urban planning, architecture, landscape design, environmental issues, art, graphics, health, information technology, business, law, public relations, the social sciences, languages, international development, tourism, hospitality and cultural studies. Either in a voluntary capacity or as consultants, staff will make themselves available to support the development of the city and the region. Often, student volunteers can make a special contribution, utilising their developing subject knowledge.

## **What we do with our community partners:**

### Volunteering:

4. Most of our student volunteers are organised through the Students' Union's highly respected Community Action at Leeds Met (CALM) programme, operating largely in northwest Leeds. Other students volunteer, along with staff, as mentors and reading support buddies through the Community Partnerships & Volunteering office. More students volunteer at sporting and cultural events in Leeds and abroad. Staff volunteer on 'action days' to work for organisations on specific projects, and they join management committees, become trustees, school governors and the like. Our international volunteering programme sends students and staff to fourteen countries to support a variety of projects in low-income areas.

### Community-based learning:

5. The ethic of volunteering is carried through to many courses where students are required to put in around 30 hours of their time to support a community group, as directed by that group. We are available, if requested, to accredit and support courses run by community organisations, or co-operate with them in developing new courses.

### Campaigning and cultural partnerships:

6. We link with third sector organisations whose remit is to change attitudes and practice in the city or the region. Thus we support Refugee Week, Black History Month, Irish History Month, the David Oluwale Memorial Committee, and we help co-ordinate a 'think tank' on community cohesion with partners in the not-for-profit sector. We will support community festivals throughout the city, funds permitting.

#### Research, consultancy and evaluation:

7. Staff and students are available to assist community groups with their research and evaluation needs – sometimes free (linked to community-based learning), sometimes paid (where we have helped raise the necessary fees).

#### Support in kind:

8. We provide facilities for community organisations at either no cost or half the commercial rate. Sports halls and pitches can be hired at half the commercial rate by community organisations. Our surplus computers and furniture are donated to community groups. Staff often give their time free on one off advice and support for community groups.

### **Good neighbours**

9. Students make a huge economic and cultural contribution to the city as a whole. They can also be noisy and disruptive. We work with the University of Leeds on the Neighbourhood Help-line which deals with complaints against students who are not being good neighbours. If a complaint against a student is upheld, we can impose a range of penalties, including disciplinary action. We will further integrate this service within the governance of the university and monitor its effectiveness. We offer focussed advice on proper behaviour to students leaving our accommodation for the private sector. We recognise the stress on housing stock in some parts of the city posed by the numbers of students in those areas. We work with Residents' and Tenants' groups across the city to assist their efforts to balance their housing needs with those of our students. Increasingly, we are moving our students to purpose built city centre accommodation. Our staff and student representatives attend meetings as requested (resources permitting) in areas of high student settlement in order to answer questions from long-term residents and take up the issues they raise. Our transport strategy is designed to reduce car usage by staff and students. We regulate

access to our campuses in accordance with this aim. We work closely with the city council to minimise the problems raised while students and staff continue to drive and park near our campuses.

## **Implementation strategy**

10. Both the university and the Students' Union are committed to developing community partnerships on the principles outlined above. The potential services, as indicated above, are many and various, and are delivered by colleagues in different parts of the university. We are pledged continuously to improve the quality of the services we offer to our partners. We are aware that it is impossible to meet all the demands that are placed upon us. Resources are limited in this field and, like community organisations, we are continuously looking to government and charities for funds to develop our services. To further develop this work, and to increase the resources devoted to this field, we will:
  - increase liaison between the various delivery agents in the university
  - develop respectful discussions between the university, the council and community organisations throughout the city
  - improve our monitoring and evaluation of existing activity
  - increase our fund-raising activity
  - improve communications with all our partners
  - develop an action plan arising from the final version of this document, listing our intended outcomes and delivery dates
  - produce an annual report/score card on progress made.
  
11. Our first step is to consult Leeds' residents on the contents of this document. It will be published and comments solicited by email or letter. We will organise facilitated meetings throughout the city to discuss the document face-to-face. It will be amended in light of comments received. When the document is agreed, we will produce a detailed implementation plan.

## **Contacting Leeds Metropolitan University**

12. For further information any aspect of this document, please contact Matthew McClelland, Head of Governance & Legal Affairs, on 0113 812 7542 or email [community@leedsmet.ac.uk](mailto:community@leedsmet.ac.uk).

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

13. The paper highlights the requirement to:
  - Educate the community on the good work being done by Leeds Met
  - Clearly state our position within the community and set realistic expectations
  - Engage the community in develop our plans
14. To conduct facilitated meetings to discuss this paper with the wider community.

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